

The audience responded in kind, resulting in a scene of mass bonding, mayhem and rock 'n' roll fun.  
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Cangbaolou has 99 and a half rooms, following the Forbidden City, which has 9,999 and a half.  
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The powerful drum beats and the dancer's uncompromising precision told the audience this would be a show full of energy.  
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A sign on the China-Myanmar border warns "No Cross Border Gambling."



## Cross Border Gambling in the Firing Line

By Chu Meng

A nationwide crackdown on illegal gambling and other criminal activities has inflicted heavy losses on across-the-border casinos that specifically target Chinese gamblers.

Since its launch on January 12, 82 casinos in North Korea, Vietnam, Burma and Russia have been forced to shut down because of a lack of Chinese gamblers. The crackdown is sponsored by the State Council and the Ministry of Public Security.

Yunnan Province in south-west China and Jilin Province in the northeast are in the front line of the battle.

Wang Hongjun, a professor from the Chinese People's Public Security University in Beijing, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday, "About 600 billion yuan (US \$72 billion) is spent in overseas casinos by Chinese gamblers annually. What is remarkable is that most of this gambling is done by corrupt governmental officials."

Wu Mingshan, one of the officials responsible for the crackdown campaign, was quoted by CCTV as saying, "Most foreign casinos in border areas strictly prohibit their own citizens from entering. They target only Chinese gamblers. Though 82 such casinos have closed down, in recent years, many more have been established across the border in Myanmar, Russia, North Korea, South Korea and even Mongolia. These casinos now number nearly 200 in total."

### Cai Haowen and Emperor Casino

The Jilin border, which has attracted considerable attention by the authorities and the media, remains open for Chinese seeking to gamble, and many tourists are still gambling large stakes at the Emperor Hotel and Casino (Yinghuang Yule Jiudian) in Rason, North Korea.

Cai Haowen, a former transportation official from Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province, attained notoriety when he fled the country on December 14 last year, after gambling nearly 3.5 million yuan (US \$422,000) in cash, and a further 3.5 million yuan in mortgage loans at the Emperor Casino. His current whereabouts

remains unknown.

According to the Yanbian Public Security Bureau, Cai crossed the border 27 times to gamble at the Emperor Casino. In just 11 months, he managed to pilfer 2.3 million yuan of his department's money, while borrowing another 1.25 million from transportation companies his department supervises, all of which he lost at the casino, Xinhua reported.

The Emperor Hotel and Casino is owned by Hong Kong investor Yang Shoucheng, who is also a big name in the entertainment industry. The island casino caters almost entirely to Chinese tourists, with North Koreans themselves banned from entering. Every day, more than 100 Chinese travel across the Tumen River to the neighboring Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone to gamble at the casino, which was built in the late 1990s at a cost of billions of yuan.

### Chinese main targets

"All who go to the Emperor are Chinese," Li Jingmin, an official with Yanbian Discipline and Inspection Commission told CCTV on January 18. Li has inspected casinos big and small in the free trade zone, including the Emperor, as part of an investigation of Party members and officials suspected of being involved in gambling.

"We photographed five cars with official license plates parked in front of a casino center. However, when we came back to investigate, we found that all were ostensibly on official errands at that time. Data from the border inspection agency showed that all the cars were registered in the name of private business owners and had left false titles of positions. It makes it extremely hard to trace them. However, evidence we have accumulated so far indicates that some local civil servants have borrowed public money and not yet returned it," Li said.

Deng Zibin, a researcher from the Supreme People's Procuratorate's Criminal Law department told *Beijing Today* Wednesday, "50,000 of the 250,000 people who leave Yanbian for North Korea on tours specifically head to the casino. And about 30 percent of those 50,000 gamblers are government officials or civil servants. However, according to the current laws and regulations, Chinese citizens



One of the many casinos just inside Myanmar's border with China. The signs are all in Chinese, leaving no doubt as to the target clientele.

**Most foreign casinos in border areas strictly prohibit their own citizens from entering. They target only Chinese gamblers.**



Motorbike taxis wait to ferry gamblers back to the border

are allowed to visit North Korea on short-term tours with minimal paperwork."

An official from the Party's corruption watchdog in the Yanbian region, who declined to give his name, told *Beijing Today* Monday, "After Cai's case, we have asked local officials to learn from it. And we are now working on a series of draft laws and regulations to curb the gambling of public funds by civil servants and officials. In the future, when government officials are found gambling they will be sacked. If they are found gambling abroad they will be expelled

from the Party."

### How big money crosses the border

Deng Zibin told *Beijing Today* that under the current foreign exchange policies jointly issued by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) and the General Administration of Customs, people entering or leaving China can carry foreign currency in cash equal to US \$5,000 or 6,000 yuan since a new regulation came into effect on September 1, 2003.

"The move was aimed at catering to the new situation in China's further reform and opening-up, facilitating business and helping combat illegal activities such as money laundering and currency smuggling. Obviously however, although the sum is much higher than the previous conservative level of US \$2,000, it is far from enough to satisfy a hard-core gambler, especially those who can spend thousands of yuan at a single roll of the dice using public funds," Deng said.

According to him, the rule stipulates that people who leave or enter China must declare any foreign currency in cash exceeding the equivalent of \$5,000. Those who want to carry more than \$5,000 abroad require special permission from a local bank or foreign exchange administration. For civil servants, there are even more rigid rules and extra declaration procedures, however, he conceded, gamblers always seem to be able to circumvent such measures.

"In order to keep their real status secret, those officials usually first register an overseas investment company in the country where they want to gamble. Then

they embezzle large sums of public money or project bank loans, and transfer it to the falsely registered vacant company. In that way, they can carry the permitted \$5,000 across the border, and easily withdraw cash from local banks whenever they want," Li Jingmin told CCTV.

Countries such as North Korea, Vietnam and Myanmar are lacking in trade income from other industries. After the United Nations began a crackdown on drug crops plants some years ago, gambling, especially gambling targeting Chinese citizens, has become a major channel for income. Under such circumstances, casinos are very keen to facilitate Chinese tourists to obtain sufficient money.

Besides those cross border foreign casinos, Macau is another popular gambling destination for mainland Chinese officials. The gambling sector and related tourism are vital to Macau's economy. Taxes from gambling comprised 63 percent of government revenue in 2002, while tourism and gaming combined accounted for 40 percent of GDP in 2001. The Macau Special Administration Region government ended a long-standing gaming monopoly early in 2002 when it awarded concessions to two additional operators. These two firms have yet to begin gambling operations.

Under the old monopoly framework, organized crime groups were, and continue to be, associated with the gambling industry through their control of VIP gaming rooms, and activities such as racketeering, loan sharking and prostitution. The VIP rooms cater to clients seeking anonymity within Macau gambling establishments and are exempt from official scrutiny. As a result, the gaming industry provides an avenue for the laundering of illicit funds.

### Gambling law proposed

But the chaos of cross border gambling of civil servants and government officials might soon be ended, or at least curbed. The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate are actively working on drafting laws and regulations to prevent this kind corrupt activity by officials, the *Procuratorate Daily* reported Sunday.

The draft law would be de-

signed to prevent money laundering in the gambling industry. The legislation aims to make money laundering by casinos more difficult, improve oversight, and tighten reporting requirements.

It will especially provide more rigid punishment for civil servants found to be involved in illegal money laundering and gambling with the public funds.

At the same time, a separate proposed measure will govern the granting of credit by casinos, which would make it harder for criminal organizations to penetrate the casinos.

Vice-Minister of Public Security Bai Jingfu said "We will squeeze the space in which border casinos operate." However, an unnamed source familiar with the casino was quoted by CCTV as saying it would be difficult to cut off the source of Emperor's customers because of the company's background.

Bai said the government would block Chinese banks from setting up ATMs or offering other services on the borders and would also block payment by credit card or bank transfer to gambling websites. "It is easy to identify gambling-aimed bank transfers, because in such areas as North Korea, Vietnam or Burma, the trading industries and business activities are extremely limited. Therefore, if the same person frequently transfers large sums of money to the same bank account in those targeted areas, the likelihood that he is gambling would be very high."

From January to May this year China is targeting high-rolling government officials and executives at state-owned companies in a concerted attack on gambling. The campaign follows President Hu Jintao's vow to step up the fight against widespread corruption. Hu recently described the battle against corruption as key to the survival of the Communist Party, and said wanton gambling among government officials seriously undermined socio-economic development and the fundamental interests of the people."

Photos by Lu Hanxin

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# Postal Savings Commercial Bank Planned

By Sun Yongjian

China's banking regulator plans to set up a new independent commercial bank based on the Postal Savings and Remittance Bureau, according to a report in *New Express* on Monday. The Postal Savings and Remittance Bureau is the arm of the China State Post Bureau (China Post) that services customer deposits.

Postal savings, introduced by the central bank in 1986, currently account for 65 percent of deposits attracted from the rural areas, according to a report in *China Youth Daily* on Thursday.

The establishment of the new bank is one of the China

Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC)'s major tasks for this year, CBRC chairman Liu Mingkang said at a meeting of the commission last Thursday.

"The bank will be placed under the banking regulatory system after it is set up so that it will face the same supervision as other commercial banks," a CBRC source told *Beijing Today* Monday.

Savings held by the bureau amount to 1 trillion yuan, making it the country's fifth-largest deposit-taking institution behind the four major state-owned commercial banks, bureau statistics show. It has more than 30,000 service outlets, assisted by China Post's nation-

wide branch network, and about 200 million account holders, or 15 percent of the population.

Head of the Financial Research Institute of the State Council's Development and Researching Center, Xia Bin, told *Beijing Today* Monday that the central bank will maintain its ban on direct lending by China Post, in recognition of a lack of adequate credit-risk controls. Without such a safeguard, Xia said, China Post could run the risk of adding to the bad loan burden of the country's state-run banks.

The issue of establishing a postal savings bank has been under discussion since the time of the former central bank president Dai Xian-

glong, Xia said.

But due to the blurred administrative distinction between post and savings business within China Post, it is first necessary to separate the financial affairs of the two.

As to the reason for establishing the bank, Xia pointed out that savings is a natural function of a commercial bank, so this function should return to the banking system.

Ba Shusong, a researcher at the same institute, commented to *Beijing Today* yesterday, "What we need is not another state-owned commercial bank, but a financial institution which specifically provides financial services to undeveloped and remote rural areas."



Xinhua Photo



Photo provided by EVA Airways

Flight crews from both sides of the Taiwan Straits are ready for the special direct charter flights between the mainland and Taiwan during the coming Spring Festival holiday season. China Eastern Airline (left) flight attendants pose for media Wednesday in Shanghai, and EVA Airlines (right) crew pose Thursday in Taipei.

# First Flight from Taipei in 56 Years to Land in Beijing

By Liu Zhaoxi

At 8 am tomorrow morning, the first mainland airline flights will take off from Beijing and Guangzhou, under a landmark agreement on direct cross-Straits charter flights for the upcoming Chinese New Year. The China Southern Airlines flight, taking off from Guangzhou, will be the first commercial plan from China's mainland in 56 years to land in Taipei.

Tomorrow noon, Beijing Capital Airport will also welcome for the first time in 56 years a charter flight from a

Taiwan commercial airline, when the China Airlines flight from Taipei touches down.

Under the deal, signed on January 15, 24 round-trip flights over Hong Kong will take Taiwan business people working on the mainland and their family members directly to and from Taipei and Kaohsiung to celebrate the Chinese lunar New Year, which falls on February 9. Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou are approved destinations on the mainland, according to China Daily. The carriers will be six mainland

airlines, Air China, Hainan Airline, China Eastern Airlines, Shanghai Airlines, China Southern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines, as well as six airlines from Taiwan - China Airlines, EVA Airways, UNI Airways, Far Eastern Air Transport, TransAsia Airways and Mandarin Airlines. The flight schedules have almost been set up, which runs through Feb. 20.

Over 70 percent of the tickets for the first China Airlines flight to Beijing were booked. Seats on the flights from Taiwan to Shanghai and Guangzhou

also saw very high booking rate, sources at the airline told Beijing Youth Daily early this week. Meanwhile, airlines on both sides are planning to use their large capacity jetliners such as Boeing 777 and Airbus330-300, both of which can carry about 300 passengers. Airlines are also gearing up with special services for the historic flights. China Southern Airlines will offer on board broadcast in dialects and southern style snacks familiar to Taiwan business people, sources at the airline told Xinhua.

# Stock Exchange Stamp Tax Reduced

By Sun Yongjian

The domestic stock market greeted long awaited news of beneficial tax policy Monday with a slight rally. The Ministry of Finance announced Sunday it was cutting stamp tax from 0.2 to 0.1 percent as of Monday, according to a Xinhua report Monday.

An official with the ministry said the tax cut, which has been approved by the State Council, is intended to help promote the growth of the securities markets.

Following the announcement of the new policy, the composite indexes of Shanghai Stock Exchange rose 1.73 percent to close at 1,255.77 and the sub-composite index of Shenzhen Stock Exchange jumped 1.82 percent to close at 3,111.40.

The policy, described as a "rescue measure," has been expected for over a year, due to the depressed downward-trend of the market since early last year.

On Monday last week the market suffered its newest setback following the securities regulator allowing the resumption of the issuance of initial public offerings (IPOs), which saw a widening of the market capacity. The Shanghai composite index fell to a record low of 1214.07 and Shenzhen sub-composite index hit 2988.16.

Analysts say the latest measure will reduce stamp tax revenue by billions of yuan per year, but the decision is good news for the country's bearish stock markets, which have slumped to record lows, according to the Xinhua report.

However this Monday's rally proved short lived, with the Shanghai composite falling 0.98 percent on Wednesday and the Shenzhen sub-composite index falling 0.61 percent.

# China and Chile Launch FTA talks

China and Chile officially launched negotiations Tuesday to establish a free trade area (FTA) between the two countries.

At the first meeting of the Trade Negotiation Committee of China-Chile FTA, China and Chile began to outline the course of the negotiations by laying out the sectors, contents and timetable of the talks, and exchanged views on trade of goods, service and investment.

Though it is still uncertain when the FTA will be set up, the officials of the two sides are optimistic about an early date.

Zhu Hong, deputy director of the Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Commerce, said that China and Chile will hold related meetings every three months.

"The whole process of the negotiation will not last too long," Zhu said.

Carlos Furche, director general of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs' International Economic Relations Directorate, said, "the negotiations will advance smoothly."

During President Hu Jintao's visits to Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Cuba last November, he and Chilean leaders raised the prospect for Sino-Chilean FTA talks.

The talks will not only benefit China and Chile, but further promote economic and trade cooperation between China and Latin American area, experts said.

Trade between China and Latin America increased almost six-fold from 1993 to 2003.

In 2003, trade between China and Latin America countries amounted to US \$26.8 billion. Latin America is enjoying a trade surplus with China, with Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina and Panama as China's top five trade partners in the region, according to Chinese customs figures.

China-Chile trade reached \$5.36 billion in 2004, up about 50 percent year-on-year. China mainly exports textiles and high-tech products, footwear and toys, and imports copper and copper products, paper pulp, fish meal, iron products and saltpeter. (Xinhua)

# Regulator Shuts Down Securities Firm

By Sun Yongjian

China's domestic securities regulator has ordered the closure of China Eagle Securities following revelations that the firm has misappropriated large amounts of customers' transaction settlement funds, according to a Xinhua report Wednesday.

A statement released by the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) said that on January 14, the commission entrusted Changjiang Securities to launch a trusteeship over the securities brokerage business because the firm had violated state regulations.

Ten days later, investigations uncovered the misappropriation of settlement funds, prompting the commission to cancel the business license and to implement the administrative penalty of closing down the firm in line with state securities law.

In the meantime, the statement stressed that the securities brokerage business was being soundly operated under the trusteeship of Changjiang Securities.

China Eagle, which has operated for 11 years in the domestic securities market, is the first securities firm with nationwide operations to be closed down in this manner, according to a *Beijing Morning Post* report Wednesday.

Just 90 million yuan has been found remaining in the firms account, meaning that 90 percent of the customers' transaction settlement funds has been embezzled, the report said.

Similar financial problems have been found in some 70 domestic securities firms, including Guangdong Securities, Wuhan Securities, China Southern Securities, Hantang Securities and Yunnan Securities.

# Britain and Canada Approved as Tourism Destinations

By Pan Hao

China and Britain have signed an agreement making Britain an approved tourism destination for Chinese travellers.

He Guangwei, director of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), signed the agreement with British foreign secretary Jack Straw in Beijing last Friday.

All 25 member nations of the European Union are now approved destination countries for Chinese tourists. CNTA signed similar agreements with the other 24 countries last year.

According to China National Tourism Administration, the total number of China's inbound tourists from the UK in 2004 was 418,100, 45 percent more than 2003, and 22 percent more than in 2002.

CRIENGLISH.com reported that Canada was also designated an approved destination last Saturday, easing restrictions on the burgeoning Chinese group tour business.

A spokesperson for the Canadian Tourism Commission said Canada expects Chinese tourism to expand fourfold over the next five years.

# More Foreigners Working in Shanghai

By Qiu Jiaoning

Almost 34,000 foreigners are currently employed in Shanghai, over 15,000 of whom received employment permission from the Shanghai Municipal Labor and Social Security Bureau in 2004, a year-on-year rise of 40.2 percent, Xinhua reported Tuesday.

The bureau had granted employment permission to a total of 65,459 foreigners by the end of 2004. The 15,573 new employees come from 112 countries, 85 percent of whom come from Japan, US, South Korea, Singapore, Germany, Malaysia, Canada, France, Australia and Britain.

Of the new employees in 2004, 64 percent are employed by foreign-funded companies, 14 percent work in non-foreign-funded enterprises, and 9 percent are hired by representative offices and branches of foreign companies.

Almost 70 percent of the foreign employees in Shanghai are executives. About 87 percent of them have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree.

Foreigners in Shanghai paid individual income tax totaling 1.6 billion yuan, accounting for 14 percent of the city's total income tax in 2004.

# Work to Start on Airport Fast Rail Link

By Nie Zhiyang

By 2008, travel between Dongzhimen and Beijing Capital Airport will be cut to just 15 minutes, with the opening an electromagnetic fast rail link. The 27-kilometer line was announced by Liu Zhiyuan, general manager of China Electrified Railway Bureau (CERB) Tuesday.

Construction of the 5 billion yuan project will begin this year. The line will run underground between Dongzhimen and Sanyuan overpass on the Third Ring Road then on an above-ground track to the airport. It will connect with the No. 2 and No. 13 subway lines, currently under construction.

Fair prices for the new rail link, which will be capable of speeds of up to 100 kilometers per hour, have yet to be determined, according to Liu.

# Investigation of Unused Land Launched

By Nie Zhiyang

The State Council has approved the country's biggest ever resource investigation of unused land, Hong Kong's Phoenix TV reported Monday.

The Ministry of Land and Resources has issued a notice requiring all units nationwide to compile a register of land left unused in cities and towns, idle land and land approved without provision before March 2005.

At the China Land Market Annual Conference 2005 during the Boao Forum in Hainan on January 18, vice-director of the ministry's Department of Land Utilization, Shu Kexin, said the investigation emphasized overall control on the one hand and economizing land use on the other, in the country's current land policies.

One measure to be taken is the establishment of an index system to control all kinds of industrial land, limit investment and control the building of garden factories; another is to ban or restrain the provision of land for industries not encouraged according to the state's industrial policy.

In 2003, some 3,763 developing zones were eliminated nationwide, while land usage of more than 81,000 new projects was checked, leading to the discovery of over 7,000 instances of illegal land use.

# Draft Oil Tax Scheme Put Forward

By Nie Zhiyang

The Development Research Center (DRC) of the State Council issued a bulletin Saturday stating that a proposal for an oil consumption tax has been put forward for debate, Xinhua reported.

According to a notice by the DRC's Industrial Economic Research Center, the main purpose of the policy is to conserve energy.

The policy is expected to have two main consequences. First, it will highlight the economic benefits and energy-conserving efficiency of diesel engine autos.

Secondly, it will help remove obstacles in the development of low-discharge vehicles as family cars.



# Lenovo-IBM Deal Awaits US Approval

By Sun Yongjian

The contract signed between Chinese computer giant Lenovo and US-based IBM Corp. is under investigation by US authorities, Lenovo spokesman Li Yaqi told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

Lenovo and IBM agreed on December 7, 2004 for the Chinese side to purchase IBM's personal computing arm for \$1.25 billion. The deal, scheduled to go through in the second quarter of 2005, would make

Lenovo the world's third largest PC maker and give IBM an 18.9 percent equity in the Chinese company.

"This is a scheduled investigation conducted in line with the recognized scheme of the deal. Lenovo will cooperate with the investigation with a positive attitude," Li said.

The deal could be held up by US regulators over national security concerns, Xinhua quoted Bloomberg as reporting on Tuesday.

The Bloomberg report, citing unnamed sources "familiar with the matter," said members of the Committee on Foreign Investments in the US, or CFIUS, were concerned that Lenovo employees might be used to conduct industrial espionage.

CFIUS is made up of 11 US agencies, including the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security, and is chaired by the Treasury Department.

IBM had said earlier this

month that it had filed for CFI-US approval as part of the chain of US regulatory approvals it was seeking to complete the deal. It has already received antitrust clearance from the US Federal Trade Commission.

The head of the Center for State Policy of the United States, whose name was not given, said that PC technology had wide military applications, *China Youth Daily* reported on Wednesday.

## TV to Go

The first mobile phone with an integrated television to hit the China market was displayed shown by a model on Wednesday. The NEC mobile has an independent TV antenna capable of receiving 56 programs. Users can send short messages or hold conversations while watching their favorite shows.

Xinhua Photo



## Chinese Home Improver Looking for Foreign Partner

By Annie Wei

Orient Home, one of China's leading home improvement retailers, has announced it is starting talks with potential foreign investors to bring in funds and advanced management experience, the *Asia Wall Street Journal* reported on Monday. Among the possible foreign investors the company was considering were Home Depot, the

world's leading home improvement retailer, and UK-based Kingfisher subsidiary B&Q, it said.

Orient Home, a subsidiary of the Shanghai-listed Orient Group, has 22 outlets in China and posted 2.05 billion yuan in sales in 2003.

"Orient Home is willing to sell as much as a 49 percent stake in the company to an investor that will provide management and

strategic advice," Lv Wenwei, head of the company's president's office was quoted as saying. How much a 49 percent stake would cost was not disclosed. Lv told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday that the company had not begun formal negotiations with any foreign company and that the size of the stake offered would depend on how talks went.

B&Q and Home Depot would

not comment on the issue, the *Asia Wall Street Journal* said. B&Q has already established a strong presence in the China market with 21 outlets that brought in \$255 million in sales in the year ending January 31, 2004.

Home Depot has not entered China's market and earlier this month the company's President and CEO Bob Nardelli said Home Depot did not have a timetable for opening its first store in China.

Nardelli did say, though, that Home Depot's growth strategy in China would follow a plan similar to the one it has followed in Mexico, meaning acquisitions compounded by organic growth.

## China Aviation Oil Unveils Restructuring Program

By Sun Yongjian

China Aviation Oil (Singapore) Corp Ltd. (CAO) revealed a restructuring scheme to handle its enormous debts in a statement released on the website of the Singapore Stock Exchange on Monday.

The company acknowledged last December that it had amassed \$550 million in debts from speculative oil derivative trading.

The principal terms of the scheme comprised a cash injection of up to US\$100 million in fresh equity from parent company China Aviation Oil Holding Company (CAOHC) and an unnamed new investor. The injection would go to working capital and cash distribution to creditors on terms to be agreed between CAOHC, the new investor and CAO, the statement said.

"A proposed scheme of arrangement between CAO and its creditors has been filed with the High Court of Singapore

today through the company's lawyers," the CAO statement said.

The statement revealed that \$100 million in upfront cash payments, comprising \$70 million from fresh equity and \$30 million from existing assets, would be made to creditors.

Another \$120 million of the company's total debts would be paid annually over a period of eight years and come from CAO's operational cash flow, dividends from investment shareholdings and the sale of assets, it said.

CAOHC has invited Temasek Holdings (Private) Ltd. to participate in the proposed fresh equity injection and discussions between the two parties are continuing.

The total proposed payout of \$220 million represents a repayment ratio of about 41.5 percent of CAO's estimated \$648 million in total liabilities. At present, CAO has an estimated 100 creditors.

By Annie Wei

A recent report recommending the Chinese government kick-start its process of granting 3G (third generation) mobile phone technology licenses has sparked heated debate in the industry since it was released last Wednesday.

The report was written by Hu Angang, head of the Center for China Studies at Tsinghua University. Hu argued in the report that the schedule for issuing 3G licenses should be accelerated to prevent monopolization and keep government officials from falling under excessive influence from industry and commercial groups.

Among those that support the report are Xiang Liang, director of *Communications World Weekly* magazine, who said

## Merrill Lynch May Team with Hua'an Securities

By Annie Wei

Merrill Lynch & Co. has agreed to co-invest in a venture with Hua'an Securities Co., a small Chinese firm, Wu Gaochao, secretary of Hua'an's board of directors told Bloomberg on Wednesday.

Hu did not reveal further details and said the deal would be made public soon. Merrill would benefit from the deal by collecting fees for domestic share sales and earning trading commissions when China opens its stock market to foreign investors, Bloomberg said.

Hefei, Anhui Province-based China

## To 3G or Not to 3G?

on Monday that he supported the idea of speeding up 3G technology in China.

But not everyone is convinced. Gan Kaili, a professor at Beijing University of Posts and Communications made a public announcement last Friday to call Hu's conclusions absurd.

Gan said the government had to be very careful in launching 3G business or risk the loss of over 1 trillion yuan in investment. He also said there was little chance that the government would make a decision based on outside influences, whether companies or professors, instead of sound reason.

Hua'an Securities has only 1.7 billion yuan in registered capital. The domestic media has speculated that Merrill could easily take control of the Chinese company as a means for grabbing greater share of market in China and catching up with rivals Goldman Sachs Group and Morgan Stanley.

An article in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* the same day said Merrill would hold a 33 percent stake in the venture, though it was unclear whether the new company would be a joint venture, an independent firm or a Hua'an subsidiary.

Erh-fei Liu, chairman of the China region at Merrill Lynch (Asia Pacific) declined to comment on the reports when contacted by *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

## China Southern to Order Five Airbus A380s

By Xu Chuanmei

An executive from China Southern Airlines confirmed Tuesday that the airline will order five A380 superjumbo airplanes from Airbus, in a \$1.4 billion deal scheduled to be signed in Paris on Friday, China Daily reported.

French transport minister Gilles de Robien first revealed the plan, Bloomberg said last Saturday, but Airbus China's spokesman Gu Ming has declined to confirm the news.

Airbus's 555-seat A380 plane, unveiled last Tuesday, will displace Boeing's 747 as the world's largest passenger aircraft. Its first test flights are scheduled

for March.

About one third of the 149 orders and letters of intent that Airbus has won so far for A380s have come from Asia. China Southern is the first Chinese carrier to place an order for the aircraft.

The superjumbo jet would primarily be used for international air routes, China Southern executive Yang Defeng said. He noted the five aircraft would not be delivered for another few years.

China's fast-growing aviation market is expected to expand about 8.1 percent annually over the next 20 years, Airbus previously predicted.

## Alstom Seals Power Deals in China

By Xu Chuanmei

France's Alstom has signed two hydropower contracts and been awarded one air pollution control equipment order in China worth a total of over 60 million euros (600 million yuan), the company announced last Thursday.

The first contract covers the supply of four 45-megawatt generating units to Hunan Province's Tongwan hydropower station. The first unit is scheduled to enter commercial operation at the end of 2007.

In the second deal, Alstom will work with Harbin Electric Machinery Co.

to supply six 780 megawatt ampere (MVA) generators for the Xiaowan hydropower station on the Lancang River in Yunnan Province.

In addition, Alstom has been awarded a contract to supply a seawater flue gas desulfurization system to Units 3 and 4 of the Qingdao Power Plant in Shandong Province. The order follows the supply of the same desulfurization systems to Units 1 and 2 at the coal-fired plant.

The adoption of the expensive environment-friendly equipment is expected to curb air pollution in the city of Qingdao.

## State Grid Invests in Growth

By Deng Minjie

The State Grid Corporation of China intends to invest around 107 billion yuan to rebuild its power network in order to keep up with China's rapid economic growth and rising consumer demand.

*Beijing Today* confirmed the news with Shao Jie from State Grid's press office on Wednesday.

"Our company has several key projects this year, including building an ultra-high voltage electric network to support power transmission through the Three Georges's underground power station,"

Shao said.

The massive state-owned enterprise planned to transmit 70 billion kilowatt hours of electricity across sub-tier grids in different regions this year, up 7.6 percent year-on-year, Xinhua reported on Tuesday.

The company's profits for 2005 were expected to hit 11.5 billion yuan, up 18.5 percent from 9.7 billion in 2004, the report said.

The company transmitted 179.8 billion kilowatt hours of electricity in 2004 across different regions and provinces, up 30.1 percent year-on-year.

## Big Four Firm Working with Local Exchange

By Deng Minjie

The Beijing office of PricewaterhouseCoopers China signed an agreement for equity exchange with the China Beijing Equity Exchange (CBEX) last Wednesday, Qiu Zifan, deputy director at the exchange's research and development department told *Beijing Today*.

The deal makes PricewaterhouseCoopers one of CBEX's international partners and marks the US company's entrance in China's

equity exchange market.

"We expect to upgrade and strengthen our service capabilities through further cooperation with leading international firms and extending our business to the overseas market," said Qiu.

"We would like to provide high quality services to domestic and overseas corporations related to equity exchange affairs, boost our trade volume and promote our financing of national enterprises."

## Shougang Plants Pulling Up Stakes for Hebei

By Pan Hao

The 12th Beijing People's Congress decided on Tuesday that local steel maker Shougang Group must move all its polluting steel production bases to locations far from the city center, mostly in the Caofeidian area of Tangshan, Hebei Province, Xinhua reported.

Zhu Jimin, chairman of Shougang Group said the relocation would be completed by 2010. The one plant left in Beijing, in suburban Shunyi District,

would have an annual production capacity of 1.7 million tons. The company's other plants, all in Hebei, would have a total production capacity of eight million tons, Zhu said.

"The intent of moving Shougang's steel plants to Hebei is neither to simply copy the old Beijing base nor to shift the factory's pollution to Hebei," Zhu said. The main reason Caofeidian was chosen, he said, was because the plants could benefit from easy access to the area's port.



# EU Approves Liberalizing Irish Mobile Market

Brussels, January 21 (Reuters) – The European Commission has approved a plan by the Irish telecommunications regulator to pry open the country's mobile telephone market.

Mobile phone operators Vodafone and mmO2 have over 90 percent of the Irish market for mobile phones and the commission said on Friday they had not allowed other operators to use their networks to offer services.

The Irish Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) has proposed to negotiate with the two mobile phone companies to open up the market so firms like Britain's Virgin Mobile Holdings can use their networks to provide services.

"I expect that the measures proposed by the Irish regulator will

increase competition and will lead to lower prices for consumers in Ireland," said Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Information Society and Media, in a statement.

If ComReg's talks with Vodafone and mmO2 fail, the regulator told the commission it would be prepared to impose terms of market access, said EU officials.

MmO2 rejected suggestions that it held joint dominance of the market. "We will be challenging the (ComReg) findings of dominance," said Johanna Cassells, head of corporate affairs for mmO2 Ireland. She said the group planned to appeal ComReg's findings.

The commission said ComReg would have to notify it of the exact details of the liberalization for approval. The European Union

executive also urged ComReg to monitor the market. Under EU rules, any plan to liberalize the mobile phone sector must be notified to the commission.

### Analyst's Take:

*The EU has been concentrating its efforts on building up a genuinely unified market union and there are both conscious and unconscious obstructions in every European ally. It was in 2003 that the EU proposed the motion to liberalize circulation of personnel, capital and service industry, including the telecommunications sector, in the master plan for actual market union. However, the telecommunications sector still lags behind in the integration process.*

ComReg wants to break up the

monopoly in its domestic market, and this can be regarded as a precursor to liberalization of the EU mobile telephone market.

*A mobile phone market needs at least three operators in order to set up a free competition mechanism and prevent monopoly, whereas monopoly enterprises may boost prices and seek colossal profits. Even if the existing monopoly enterprises permit the others to use their networks to provide services, this still doesn't represent the complete opening-up of the Irish mobile phone market. We should focus on the costs of use for networks, hardware and software technology, related regulations and laws.*

*If the other domestic mobile phone enterprises are not strong enough to compete with the two monopoly operators, the government can take measures to offer preferential treatment to foreign mobile phone operators. In short, more mobile phone operators can help moderate prices for consumers.*

– **Zhang Jianxiong, professor of the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Qiu Jiaoning)**

## NYSE Must Hand Over Grasso Report

New York, January 25 (Reuters) – New York Stock Exchange lawyers must give former chairman Richard Grasso's legal team a confidential report describing how he amassed his controversial \$188.5 million pay package, a judge ruled late on Tuesday.

New York State Justice Charles Ramos rejected the NYSE's argument that the report was privileged information.

Grasso was ousted in September 2003 after a furious public outcry over his compensation package.

Last year New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer sued Grasso in an

effort to recoup at least \$100 million, charging that the package was against New York State's not-for-profit laws.

The Webb report – named after Chicago lawyer Dan Webb, who the exchange commissioned to investigate the circumstances behind Grasso's pay – formed the cornerstone of many of Spitzer's charges against Grasso.

Legal experts say the NYSE's refusal to hand over the document may be because they feared it would be made public.

A spokesman for Grasso was not immediately available to comment.

## US Deficit to Hit New Record

Washington, January 25 (AP) – The White House will project that this year's federal deficit will hit \$427 billion, a senior administration official said Tuesday, a record amount partly driven by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The official, among three who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, said the estimate was a conservative one that assumed some higher spending than other analysts use. Last February, the White House projected that the 2004 shortfall would hit \$521 billion, only to see it come in at \$412 billion.

The official said the figure represented progress because it would be smaller than last year's record \$412 billion shortfall when compared to the size



A teller displays 100-dollar bills at a money exchange shop. The US budget deficit is likely to hit a record 427 billion dollars in fiscal 2005.

AFP Photo

of the growing US economy. That ratio is a key measure of the deficit's potency.

"Our projections will show we remain on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009," one of President Bush's budget goals, the official told reporters.

Even so, the number was among a blizzard of figures released Tuesday that illustrated how federal deficits remain a problem that Bush and Congress must reckon with.

## Google, Yahoo Launch TV Search Effort

Washington, January 25 (AFP) – Internet giants Yahoo and Google moved into a new battleground in the search business – video and television content.

Google unveiled a service that allows users to search for the content of TV programs, allowing searches of programs on the US Public Broadcasting System, the National Basketball Association, Fox News and C-Span, the service broadcasting congressional hearings.

"What Google did for the Internet, Google Video aims to do for television," said Larry Page, Google co-founder and president of products. "This

preview release demonstrates how searching television can work today."

Google said the service can increase viewership by providing Google users with information on future airings of relevant programs.

But it does not provide a direct link to video. Instead, based on the search request, it offers a list of relevant television programs with still images and text excerpts. Google did not indicate any plans to expand the service outside US media.

Yahoo meanwhile launched a test service that lets users search content on Bloomberg TV, BSKyB and BBC.

## Gates's Boost for Kids' Health

January 25 (BusinessWeek Online) – On the eve of Bill Gates' appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said it will donate \$750 million over the next 10 years to make vaccinations available to more children in developing countries. The January 24 announcement comes along with a commitment by the government of Norway to contribute \$290 million to the effort over five years – bringing total newly available funding to more than \$1 billion.

The funds will support the

work of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), a partnership between governments and aid organizations that focuses on speeding development of new vaccines, strengthening vaccine-delivery systems, and improving access for poor countries. Julian Lob-Levyt, GAVI's executive secretary, says the grant will help the organization expand its efforts. "Strong immunization systems do not happen overnight," he notes. "Scaling up services and building up natural capacity on the ground requires long-term support."

## Cell Phones Only

January 25 (USA Today) – For some workers, the desktop telephone is joining the adding machine and typewriter on the list of obsolete office equipment.

In a move that other companies might soon follow, Sprint announced Monday that about 8,000 employees at Ford Motor will jettison their desktop phones and use cell phones exclusively.

"I wouldn't say it's a widespread trend, but clearly we're moving in the direction where wireless is invading the fixed space," says Eugene Signorini, who follows wireless trends for the Yankee Group, a technology consulting firm. Ford plans to start removing desk-

top phones by the end of March for the first wave of the 8,000 engineers who received their new cell phones, says Jackie Shuk, Ford's manager of product operations.

But most of the engineers in the product development group are eager to make the shift, she says. The conversion is expected to be finished this year.

The group, based in Dearborn, Mich., was chosen because employees are often away from their desks and "require a lot of collaboration and a lot of instant communication," says Ford telecommunications manager Jeff Lemmer. The cell phones sport a walkie-talkie feature.

# World Social Forum Porto Alegre 2005

The World Social Forum began as a gathering of progressive activists, academics, socially-responsible business leaders and non-governmental organizations from around the world, a space in which they could meet each other, learn from sharing experiences, reflect on their own connection to the multiple dimensions of globalization, and explore new strategies for designing compassionate, sustainable and just social systems.



## French Government Braces for More Pressure

Paris, January 21 (Reuters) – France's conservative government is vowing not to buckle under pressure from the worst strikes for two years, but a tough battle is brewing after a week of protests which have strengthened the unions' resolve.

At least 210,000 public sector workers took to the streets across France on Thursday and doctors, teachers, judges, civil servants, energy and railway workers staged warning strikes this week over pay, job cuts and unpopular reforms.

Neither side shows any sign of blinking after the biggest wave of labor unrest since protests against pension reforms that the government rode out in the first half of 2003.

"You can check my pockets. I don't have any money to put on the table," Civil Service Minister Renaud Dutreil said late on Thursday, rejecting civil servants' pay demands.

But the trade unions have been encouraged by the response to their strike calls this week. They have planned a day of nationwide protests on February 5 and are expected to meet next week to decide on what further action to take.

"It's been a success, a great success even," said Bernard Thibault of the large CGT trade union, vowing that workers would take to the streets again soon. The response to any calls for protests will be a major test of the unions' strength, while the government's ability to hold out against the protests will be closely watched abroad.

The government can ill afford to meet the pay demands because it is under pressure from Brussels to cut the public deficit below the EU limit of three percent of gross domestic product this year after breaching it for three years in a row.

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin has also said he will not abandon plans to relax the law on the 35-hour working week, saying this will give firms more freedom to negotiate work time, cut unemployment and make French industry more competitive.

### Analyst's Take:

*From a historical perspective, France has been endowed with fertile soil for workers' movements. The nation's working class has kept up its traditions of revolutionary spirit and unity; French labor unions are famous for their ability to organize strikes.*

*The French economy is slack and facing numerous problems. As a result, workers of almost every profession and trade have gone out to strike in succession since 2001.*

*France's 2004 public budget deficit is 43.9 billion euros, amounting to about 3.6 percent of its GDP, which breaks the euro zone limit for the third straight year. France has pledged to meet the EU's three percent limit in 2005. Hence, the government has to redouble its efforts to limit public spending and keep the budget deficit to within the limit. In addition, the French unemployment rate stands at 9.9 percent, far above the euro zone's average. The government has promised to cut it to around 9.0 percent by the end of this year.*

*A series of economic pressures are bound to push the government to carry out controversial reforms. It is necessary and significant for France to reform despite the risk of large-scale popular discontent. However, the government may make some concessions to prevent the conflicts from being sharpened too much.*

*France is regarded as a country with an export-oriented economy; so its economic growth can hardly be promoted without export superiority. In 2004, the bilateral trade volume between France and China was only US\$17.58 billion while that between Germany and China exceeded US\$50 billion. France needs to step up economic and trade cooperation with other countries and enhance the capacity to earn foreign exchange through exports.*

– **Zhao Junjie, associate professor and special consultant of the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Qiu Jiaoning)**



The Citigroup Center in New York  
AFP Photo

Frankfurt, January 25 (AFP) – BaFin, the German financial market regulator, has asked prosecutors to probe US banking giant Citigroup over possible market manipulation in the eurozone government bond futures market, BaFin chief Jochen Sanio told the French daily *Les Echos*.

"There is concrete evidence that they (Citigroup traders) attempted to push up the price (of the bonds) artificially and then take advantage of that," a BaFin official was quoted as saying.

Prosecutors in Frankfurt confirmed that a complaint had been filed against six Citigroup employees, but refused to disclose any further details.

At the center of the probe are some controversial bond trades by Citigroup in August.

At the time, the US giant flooded the cash market with 11 billion euros (14.3 billion dollars) in sell orders, causing rivals to rush to hedge their exposure in the Eurex market for German government bonds by selling the futures.

About half an hour later, Citigroup allegedly bought back four billion euros of the bonds at a lower price, raising suspicions of market manipulation.

Citigroup allegedly made a profit of around 17 million

## German Regulators Probe Citigroup Bond Case

euros on the deal.

Prosecutors said that they would examine whether there were sufficient grounds to launch an investigation. But no further details could be made available at this stage.

BaFin had said in December that it was probing the incident in "close cooperation" with the regulatory authorities in Britain and Europe.

A Citigroup spokesman said in a statement issued in New York that the bank regretted the development.

"We are disappointed that BaFin has referred to the prosecutor the question of whether action should be brought against individuals involved in the matter," the statement said.

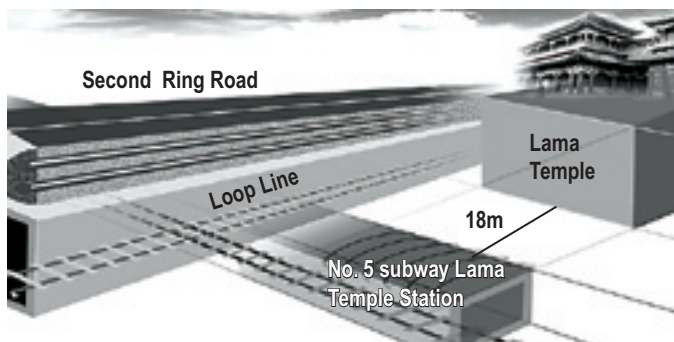
"We will continue to cooperate fully with all authorities reviewing this matter."

The Citigroup investigation represents an important test case in Germany, which adopted a new law on investor protection in 2002, bringing its legislation on market manipulation into line with the rest of the European Union.

According to an EU directive, market manipulation can, among other things, involve transactions or orders to trade that give misleading signals about the demand for or supply of financial instruments.



# Subway Hub a Tricky Dig



By Li Ruifen

Construction of the Lama Temple subway station for the new No. 5 subway line is going smoothly, Li Wenjian, project manager at Beijing City Construction Group, told *Beijing Today* by telephone on Tuesday.

Underground construction of the station began on January 17. Because of its location and design, the station would be the most dif-

ficult of Beijing's many new stations to build and it should be the widest one in the country with a width of 32 meters, Li was quoted as saying by *Beijing Youth Daily* on Sunday.

The subway station lies in a tricky location just 10 meters beneath the North Second Ring Road and 18 meters from the wall of the Lama Temple, or Yonghegong. Several key telecommunication, power and nat-

ural gas pipelines run through the area and have to be carefully circumvented to keep from disrupting daily life and business on the surface.

Moreover, the station has to be reinforced to lessen dangers of surface roads collapsing under the weight of heavy traffic.

The new station will be an interchange connecting the new No. 5 line with the Lama Temple station of the older loop line.

## Deprogramming Internet Addicts

By Tian Yuan

Thirteen young people all but addicted to the Internet are undergoing eight days of special training to wean them of their online dependencies in the Shuyi Holiday Village in Huairou County. They are scheduled to return home on Sunday.

These 13 were selected from among 30 volunteers who admitted they were hooked on the Internet and wanted to go through the training program. The youngest of the subjects is 14 and the eldest 24.

The training is being conducted by volunteers from the Beijing Institute of Technology, all of whom have psychology backgrounds. Dr. Gao Wenbin from the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences is in charge of the program.

"In the completely closed classes, participants will receive development training and psychological consultation during the day and be able to take part in sports and entertainment events, as well as do their homework, at night. They will have fun in the real, not the virtual, world, which we hope will help them change significantly," Gao told *Beijing Today*.

Gao and two other teachers met the parents of the 13 participants on Tuesday night to brief them and explain their roles in helping their children break their Internet habits.

"Sometimes parents struggle to communicate with their children because they do not express their love the right way. They do not actively exchange ideas with children and are reluctant to admit their own mistakes," he said.

"Parents should be kind but resolute, they should stick to their principles and never give their children unclear instructions. So I hope parents will also be able to make some changes to create more warm and positive environments for their children."

## It's Yesterday Once More ...

By Liu Zhaoxi

Everyday items from Beijing's more recent history in the Capital Museum's collection were displayed in a preview show for the press over the weekend. Among the shown objects, mostly from the late Qing Dynasty and Republican period, were a signboard from a vinegar store, handwritten bank account booklets, a glazed glass box used as a refrigerator and an early 20th century yearbook from a Beijing elementary school.

Wang Chuncheng, director of the museum's collections department, told *Beijing Today* the relics were all donated by Beijing citizens or found and purchased from local second-hand markets by him and his colleagues.

"In the past, collections of more modern pieces were not paid as much attention to as ancient ones. But recently, more people are realizing they need to learn about yesterday," Wang said.

He and his team followed the motto "collect today for tomorrow" in order to assemble a coherent record of recent history. After the 2003 SARS outbreak, for example, they collected items that represented that unusual period.

"Some items may not be relics today, but they will be soon," Wang said. Before SARS was quashed, the museum collected about 3,000 items related to the city's battle against the virus, including a black board on which the words "Folks, please wait one more day. The prices of goods will soon fall" were written in chalk with a date of April 25 (2003). Wang noted the blackboard was rare evidence of widespread price hikes during the outbreak.

The museum has more than 200,000 pieces stored in a warehouse waiting to go on display once it moves from its current location in the Confucius Temple to a larger site. Museum official Sun Wuyi told *Beijing Today* the new 60,000 square-meter venue, being built just off Chang'an Avenue, should open before the end of the year.



The museum's collection includes signs of hutongs that have been demolished.

Photo by Jia Ting



## Lucky Ducks

By Wang Fang

The famed Quanjude Qianmen Restaurant has launched a new service allowing customers to write auspicious words in edible ink on ducks before the birds are roasted, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Wednesday.

A large glass window to the roasting room allows curious customers to watch the roasting

process and see their lucky words glaze over as the ducks' skin turns succulent golden brown.

During Spring Festival, the restaurant will also arrange special banquets along themes chosen from Chinese tradition and customers, such as the "Five Fortunes" – wealth, promotion, longevity, happiness and treasure.

Photo By Wang Zhenlong

## Cabbies Get Their Own Hang-out

By Tian Yuan

Local taxi drivers have a new place to eat and rest since Beijing's first taxi service center opened Monday under the Yansha Bridge on the East Third Ring Road.

The Jinjiuhuan Yun Taxi Management and Service Center has 30 parking places, a toilet and a small room with eight seats and a counter serving meals for drivers. Drinking water is free. The new facility is open from 7 am to 7 pm and serves meals between 10 am and 3 pm.

"The municipal government allowed us to use this piece of land for trial operation as a part of larger ring road management project," Jinjiuhuan Yun manager Chen Shaojian told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday. "Since we're just getting started, we have limited space and facilities. But as our business grows, we plan to broaden the range of services we offer taxi drivers."

With more than 60,000 cabs plying the streets of Beijing, there certainly is a market.

Chen said the center's next steps would be to hire more people and build connections with nearby shopping centers, which could send signals when customers needed cabs. "Our plan could help ease the heavy traffic in the area and create a more comfortable environment for taxi drivers," he said.

"I like the food here and the place is very clean," a taxi driver surnamed Yang told *Beijing Today*. "I can come here to meet my friends. We look forward to having bigger places to hang out in the future."

By Zhou Ying

Beijing Rongbao Auction Co. named names last week when it told the Xuanwu branch of the Beijing Industry and Commerce Administration Bureau who had supplied forgeries of works by renowned artist Han Meilin, company vice general manager Wang Wei said.

A copy of one of Han's paintings was taken off an Internet-posted list of items up for auction by Rongbao on January 16, one day before it would have been put on sale at Beijing's Asia Hotel, as *Beijing Today* reported last Friday.

Wang told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Sunday that private information was protected by China's Auction Law and the company could only disclose information on the seller of the fake art works if a government or judicial department launched an investigation into the matter.

But the company later changed its tune. "We provided the information on the supplier to the related department last week to assist them in tracking down the forger," he said.

After blowing the whistle on the Rongbao auction, Han discovered though research on the Internet that more than 400 forgeries of his paintings had been sold by various auction companies.

"As an artist, I really did not have the time and ener-

## Auctioneer Squeals on Fake Art Source

gy to look into this problem before. But now I can't take it," Han told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Saturday.

Wang maintained that there are no detailed laws in China stipulating his company was under obligation to guarantee the authenticity of works put up for auction. "To maintain our reputation, we will start inviting some experts to do primary assessments, but it will be hard to completely avoid mistakes," he said.

Chen Lihua, Han's lawyer, told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday that she thought the article of the Auction Law that protected sellers' personal information was not reasonable. "That article should only be effective for legal deals. When something illegal is done, auctioneers should be required to disclose the information immediately," Chen said.

Chen said she would work with the Industry and Commerce Administration Bureau to inspect the information provided by Beijing Rongbao and then decide on a next step.

## New Spot Sought for Old Chinese "Air Force 1"

By Tian Yuan

An aging plane that used to fly top Chinese leaders around the country and abroad is looking for a new home because it is losing its space at the China Military Museum.

The B-2207 "Trident" jet was the main means of transportation for Chinese leaders in the 1970s and carried Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping on long trips. The plane was retired from service in 1995, when its British manufacturer stopped producing the model.

A company purchased the plane shortly after its retirement to use for promotional purposes, but then decided to put it on display at the Military Museum in 1996. Since then, more than 1.6 million visitors have seen the jet.

But the contract between the company, Beijing Ruiyikang Trading Co., and the museum ended on December 31 last year. The museum told the company to move the plane because it planned to rearrange its exhibition space.

Beijing Ruiyikang General Manager Wu Sanzhong said he understood the museum's decision, but was not sure what to do with the huge plane. He had considered displaying it at the west side of the China Millennium Monument, near the Song Qingling Children's Science and Technology Museum, but that plan had yet to be approved by the Municipal Bureau of Parks.

"This plane has real historical and educational value and I hope it can be well protected," Wu said. "Anyone interested can work with us to exhibit it or can buy it from us for his own collection or to donate to the city so it can be appreciated by all citizens."



Chen Fang and her son

Photo by Chen Bai

## Prisoner Gets Baby Break

By Li Ruifen

A young woman on Monday became the first person let out of a Beijing prison to see a relative outside Spring Festival week. With a police escort, Chen Fang was allowed a short break from her re-education through labor at a local penitentiary to meet her young son Dingding at the Special Children's Village, a shelter for abandoned children in Shunyi District.

Chen was allowed to dress normally for the mother-son reunion. By law, she should have been held in handcuffs, but police decided to forgo the safety measure for fear of frightening her son.

Dingding is just three and a half years old, but looks more mature than most children his age, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Monday. He had been living in the children's village for more than three months and was getting along well with other children, the paper said. When asked where his father was, the child replied, "Papa has gone. He left me and ran away."

Wang Huabin, an official with the Beijing Bureau of Reeducation through Labor, confirmed Dingding was abandoned by his father, who went to the bureau's office on October 24, 2004 to ask to see Chen and suddenly left before the police could do anything. He left behind the boy and a plastic bag containing a piece of paper with the child's name and a claim he could not take care of Dingding because of illness.

Last October, Chen Fang was sentenced to one year in prison for prostitution.

When she saw the sound living conditions provided to her child, she expressed her gratitude to the Shunyi police. Chen vowed that once her prison term was over, she would take her son and return to her rural hometown to make a living as a farmer.



# How Rich is Middle Class



A typical middle class house in a developed country.



Housing is one of the criteria for defining "the middle class".

photo provided by Beijing Youth Daily

By Wang Fang

The National Bureau of Statistics recently released the result of its latest survey, which states "60,000 to 500,000 yuan in annual income (in a family of three) defines the middle-income group in Chinese cities." This is the first time that China's middle class has been given a clear numerical definition.

Cheng Xuebing, an official with the National Bureau of Statistics, told Xinhua last Thursday that the survey on the Chinese middle class was conducted by the Urban Survey Organization of the National Bureau of Statistics. "The conclusion of '60,000 to 500,000 yuan' is derived from this four-month sample research," he added. The bureau defined the standard based on a survey with 300,000 questionnaires released and 263,584 returned valid responses.

"The initial basis for the estimate came from the World Bank's figures on the world's middle-income group whose per capita GDP was between US\$3,470 and US\$8,000. In order to convert the two numbers into a criterion for China's middle-income group, three conversions were involved: first, from per capita GDP to per capita income; second, from the dollar to the renminbi; and third, adjusting purchasing power," he said.

The average middle-class income calculated on the basis of these three conversions had a lower limit of 65,000 yuan and an upper limit of 180,000 yuan. After factoring in the big income gaps among different re-

gions in China, the conclusion came down to between 60,000 and 500,000 yuan.

"According to the present development rate, the proportion of the middle class in China will expand from the current 5.04% of the population to 45% by 2020," Cheng anticipated based on the survey.

He explained to Xinhua why the survey was only carried out in Chinese cities. "The ratio of the Chinese urban middle class in cities is far larger than in the rural areas, so there is a greater need to study the situation of the Chinese urban middle class," he was quoted as saying.

The urban population in China is around 0.4 billion. So according to the threshold of 60,000 yuan in Cheng's survey, there are over 20 million people in China who qualify as middle class.

Zhang Yingxiang, a spokesman for the National Bureau of Statistics, told a press conference on Monday that Cheng's survey did not represent the National Bureau of Statistics. "It is possible for some research groups or individuals to get relevant data on the Chinese middle class by referring to research carried out in other countries. However, the National Bureau of Statistics cannot comment on the accuracy and the truth of Cheng's survey."

**Zhang Chengyao**, researcher with the Industrial Economic Research Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences: **income is not enough to define the Chinese middle class**

The definition of middle class, from a broad sense, is about a kind of spiritual status other than economic. Middle class does

not only refer to economic status. Reputation, career, social intercourse and family background are all other factors defining the middle class. For instance, one distinguishing aspect of the middle class is that they have the capacity to improve their living standards. Also, the range of 60,000 yuan to 500,000 yuan is too large. The life of a family, which has a 60,000-yuan annual income, is very different from one that has a 500,000-yuan annual income.

**Zhang Wanli**, associate researcher with the Sociology Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences: **China's middle class is emerging**

At present, there are six principal characteristics of the Chinese middle class: they follow Western culture and customs; they have their own etiquette and standards for their private lives; they pay attention to their social image; they live under intense pressure, physical and mental; they care and spend time and money on charity or volunteer work; they're indifferent about politics but enthusiastic about economic reform. The so-called "Chinese middle class" is only similar to the Western middle class in a few aspects. China's middle class is still going through a development phase.

**Lü Xueyi**, former director of the Sociology Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences: **career is the main element in defining the middle class**

Career is the most important aspect of the middle class. A white-collar worker who earns 3,000 yuan per month is middle class, while a taxi driver whose

income is 5,000 yuan per month is not. Generally speaking, most Chinese middle class workers were born in the 1960s and 1970s and they have university degrees. So the Chinese middle class is about 20 percent of the current population.

**Lu Dale**, professor with the Sociology faculty of the Chinese University of Hong Kong: **income is not a persuasive measurement in defining the middle class**

In Hong Kong, a person whose income is from 20,000 to 50,000 HK dollars can be categorized as middle class in terms of income; however, it does not mean that they are middle class. It depends on the price of your house, the way you spend your money, the holiday you are taking. In Hong Kong, the standard is that if a person achieves success via higher education, then he is middle class. According to this standard, the proportion of middle class people in Hong Kong is about 20-50 percent of the whole population. These people also face the risk of being laid off or losing their jobs.

**Zoe Harris**, a British woman teaching in Beijing: **being middle class is about being able to choose**

The middle class traditionally means those with average income, wealth, standard of living, level of literacy and so on. In modern society, the term "middle class" is very broad, mainly due to the general rise in living standards and in access to education. The term is associated with owning a house and a car, having a salaried job, overseas holidays and higher education. All of these things denote a certain level of wealth. However, money can now be acquired by different people in different circumstances. Therefore the terms "upper middle class" and "lower middle class" have emerged in order to signify the distinctions. The upper middle classes will perhaps have more family background in property and inherited wealth, and therefore a longer history of higher education and social influence, while the lower middle classes may have exactly the same standard of living but their lifestyle is in contrast to the previous generation or two of their family. Fundamentally, the implication of the term "middle class" is one of choice. The middle class is able to make choices about significant life decisions - what career shall I pursue and which schools shall I send my children to? This ability to choose stems from the confidence that provided by financial security.

By Wang Fang

State Council departments are considering canceling the week-long holidays around International Labor Day, National Day and the Chinese Spring Festival and returning to a system where people have more choice over when to take their own holidays, Xinhua reported last Saturday.

China National Tourism Administration sources disclosed to *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday that they have discussed the issue with various bodies, including the Ministry of Railways, the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the National Development and Reform Commission. However, the spokesman of China National Tourism told medias that in the near future, it is impossible to cancel the "golden week" system.

In September 1999, the State Council decided to introduce the three so-called "golden weeks" to help stimulate domestic consumption and lessen the impact of the Asian financial crisis by spurring development of the tourism industry.

However, in the past five years of the implementation of golden weeks, the public have become "increasingly fed up with mob scenes and price gouging that result when virtually the entire nation is sent on vacation at once," Beijing-based public survey company Horizon Research found in its recent research on the golden weeks system.

The survey involved 3,502

a spokesman for the China Development and Reform Commission stated.

It seems experts in tourism, environmental protection and economics as well as the public are all enthusiastic about scrapping the golden weeks and replacing them with flexible, paid annual leave for all workers.

**Zhao Peng**, director of the Tourism Department of Beijing Union University: **golden weeks are not beneficial from the long-term point of view**

We should take into account the different needs of people from different regions and ethnic groups. It's true that golden weeks enhance local tourism; however, it is not beneficial for the future. For example, at Wuhan Nine Peaks Zoo in Hubei Province, a one-thousand-year-old "immortal turtle" was trodden to death by visitors last year because too many of them tried to get close to it.

**Joseph Tung**, executive director of the Travel Industry Council in Hong Kong: **flexible holidays will have little impact on the tourism market**

Mainland arrivals have mushroomed in recent years with the easing in travel curbs. If the current golden weeks system changes, it's not likely to upset anybody in Hong Kong. In any case, Chinese mainland tourists have already begun voting with their feet: the number of mainland tour groups visiting Hong Kong during the last golden week (the



Crowds of tourists through the street in Zhangjiajie, a scenic spot, during the holiday.

photo by Zhangjiajie.com.cn

## You Can Keep Your Golden Weeks

people aged 18-65 from ten big and medium size cities and found that 44 percent of them wanted "free and flexible holidays with payments maintained" instead of fixed holidays.

In other words, perhaps employers should allow employees 10 to 15 days of paid holiday per year, with employees deciding when and how to spend the holiday adjusting to their work, Horizon Research explained in the questionnaire for the research.

The survey found that those most strongly in favor of choice were young people aged 18 to 39, singles, couples with a child under 14 and couples living with their parents. Meanwhile, those aged over 40 also favor accumulating all their holidays and spending them with their families, said the survey.

It also attributes the reasons for people's disfavor with the current golden weeks to too many jams in transportation, restaurants, hotels and scenic spots.

"There are too many people everywhere. Even for the toilet, people have to wait in a long queue," said Wang Fan, a student from Tsinghua University who traveled in the last golden week during the National Holiday in 2004.

According to statistics released by the National Holiday Office in 2004, about 13 million people visited China's 99 major tourist attractions during the three national holidays, or 18,900 people per attraction per day. The average Chinese tourist attraction, however, can only handle 5,000 to 6,000 visitors; otherwise damage is inevitable, the office warned.

The 10th Five-Year Plan, China's 2001-2005 economic and social development blueprint, has already raised the possibility of introducing 26-36 flexible days of paid holiday per year instead of the fixed week-long vacations,

National Day holiday in 2004) was smaller than on ordinary days. I suppose that both travel agencies and tourists would welcome flexible holidays.

**Zhang Jun**, a college student in Beijing: **who is going to hear my voice?**

It seems that no one really cares about what I think as a traveler and citizen. The start and the cancellation of golden weeks seem to me like a total government thing. Is it possible for me to give my advice and opinion since it really impacts my life, in particular, the transportation and service I am going to get during golden weeks? Is it possible to set up a commission to hear people's voices before the new policy is issued?

**Liu Yanni**, a shop owner at Xidan business center, Beijing: **there's no need for reform**

The tourists in golden weeks mean profit for us. If the long golden weeks are cancelled, the number of tourists will drop dramatically and we will lose money. In addition, I'm worried that if the holiday becomes flexible, it will become more difficult when I arrange an appointment with the governmental units, such as the police bureau or the administration of industry and commerce.

**Pu Hongwei**, 24 from Chongqing, a traveler in Beijing: **does it really matter?**

For me, there is not a big difference between a seven-day golden week or a flexible holiday. The train is always busy and the living expenses in big cities are increasing. People go traveling whenever they have a chance. When I first came to Beijing when I was 18, I saw almost the same amount of people in the parks. And for some cities, like Beijing, people want to come during the autumn anyway, so a flexible holiday does not change things very much.

### Soundbites

"I express my shame in the face of those who were murdered and above all you, who survived the hell of the concentration camps. The overwhelming majority of Germans living today bear no guilt for the Holocaust, but they do bear a special responsibility,"

German Chancellor **Gerhard Schröder** told an audience at a Berlin theater that included Auschwitz survivors Tuesday ahead of the 60th anniversary of the Auschwitz death camp's Liberation.

"The crowd began pushing and I saw people falling like sacks on top of each other. I started shouting for help, but there were no policemen," said **Namdeo Yerunkar**, a 45-year-old pilgrim from Bombay. His wife, **Nirmala**, was among the dead. Thousands of Hindus panicked during a religious procession in western India on Tuesday, triggering a stampede that killed more than 300, and many more people were injured. Police

are searching for the pilgrims who set fire to shops along a crowded walkway, triggering the panicked crush.

"I'm sure Ukraine is the heart of Europe. The future of Europe is impossible without Ukraine," Ukraine's reformist leader **Viktor Yushchenko** who took office on Sunday insisted Tuesday that his country can meet requirements to join the European Union and called on the 35-nation bloc to offer the prospect of full membership, while EU officials have cautioned that Ukraine, like other potential applicants, could face a long wait before joining the EU.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran promotes women's sports while it safeguards cultural values. We like to prove to the world women can compete and observe the Islamic dress code as well," Iranian parliament speaker **Gholam Ali Haddad Adel** said to about 10,000 men and women attending Sunday's opening ceremony of the

All-Women Games for Muslim and Asian Capitals, at which men will be barred from watching all but one event, shooting. In the past, Iranian female athletes were restricted from participating in sporting events because of their country's strict dress code. Iran also bars mixed competition and restricts mingling between unrelated males and females in public.

"Bringing 'The Aviator' to the screen took years of effort by an extraordinary group of individuals, and I am thrilled that so many of the people who poured their heart into the film have been recognized by the academy," said **Martin Scorsese**, director of the Howard Hughes epic "The Aviator" that led Academy Awards contenders with 11 nominations Tuesday, including best picture, plus acting honors for Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett and Alan Alda and a directing slot for Scorsese.

(Edited by Lene Chou)



# Statistics Bureau Reports on 2004 State of National Macro Economy

China's gross domestic product grew at a sizzling 9.5% in 2004 to reach a total of 13.65 trillion yuan, the National Bureau of Statistics announced on Tuesday.

By Dong Nan / Wei Ying

Though higher than some analysts expected, the 2004 GDP figure has been called an indication that the Chinese government's attempts to cool the country's overheating economy have done their job.

"This illustrates that the measures for macroeconomic regulation adopted by the central government were prompt, correct and effective," said Li Deshui, commissioner of the National Bureau of Statistics. "And implementation of these measures helped prevent local problems from expanding into overall problems and avoid serious inflation and big ups and downs of the economy."

## Macro-control measures successful

The bureau's report shows that China's GDP climbed consistently in 2004 without experiencing major ups and down.

Of the total 13.65 trillion yuan GDP, primary industry contributed 2.1 trillion yuan, up 6.3% year-on-year, the value of the secondary industry reached 7.24 trillion yuan, up 11.1%, and the tertiary industry accounted for 4.34 trillion yuan, up 8.3%.

Li said that from the beginning of last year, China's economy experienced a period of excessive growth of investment, with the growth rate reaching a sky-high 43% in the first quarter of 2004. Therefore, the central government implemented a series of macro-control measures to scale back the growth of the national economy, including tightening control over investment and bank loans through a combination of economic and legal means, raising the deposit-reserve ratio for financial institutions, strictly checking for illegal land acquisition and use, and cutting industrial projects that consumed lots of energy and resources but were economically inefficient.

The findings for 2004 indicate the measures worked. Investment growth speed stably declined over the year, represented by 43% growth in the first quarter, 28.6% growth in the first six months and growth of 27.7% during the first nine months for a 25.8% total rate for 2004. That was down 1.9% from 2003's investment growth speed. And the structure of investment improved as well, Li said.

"Without macro-control, the GDP growth rate would have surpassed 9.5%, but then there would have been serious problems like inflation and major rises and falls," he said. "Thanks to those timely, decisive and strong macro-control measures, the bad results that no one would like to see did not happen and the Chinese economy is in its healthiest phase in the past decade."

But that does not mean economic regulators can rest on their laurels. Li pointed out it was crucial to keep working to prevent the growth rate of investment in fixed assets from rebounding. The impulse to invest was still strong in many parts of the country, he said, and scales of construction projects remained large. Many economists thought the ideal rate of investment growth was 15% to 20%, meaning 2004's 25.8% was still too high.

## Good news for agriculture

The statistics bureau report showed that China's agriculture industry had a strong year in 2004, with total grain output reaching 496.5 million tons, an increase of 38.8 million tons, or 9%, from 2003, reversing the consecutive downward trend seen since 1999. The average yield of grain crops was 308 kilograms per *mu* (or 4,620 kilograms per hectare), up 6.6%. The figures for total grain production and average yield of grain crops both broke historical records.

China's total cotton production was 6.32 million tons, up 30%, production of oil bearing crops was 30.57 million tons, up 8.8%, production of sugar crops was 95.28 million tons, down 1.2%, production of meat totaled 72.60 million tons, up 4.7%, and the output of aquatic products was 48.55 million tons, up 3.2%.



Li Deshui at Tuesday's press conference

Photo by sina.com

Rural residents prospered, with per capita net income among rural households hitting 2,936 yuan, a real increase of 6.8%, the highest growth rate since 1997.

Li said that the reasons for the good news were favorable agriculture policies of the central government, stable climactic conditions, rising grain prices and farmers' hard work. He predicted the domestic agriculture industry and rural people's incomes would keep growing in 2005, but perhaps not as fast as last year.

## Improved employment situation

Statistics from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security indicated that 9.8 million new jobs were provided to Chinese urban residents in 2004, 800,000 more than the expected target, Li noted. The national urban registered unemployment rate was 4.2%, or 0.1 percentage point lower than in 2003.

China's urban unemployment rate had risen consistently starting in 1991. That year, it was 2.3% in 1991, it rose to 3.1% in 2000 and reached 4.3% in 2003. Therefore, 2004 was the first year in many for the rate to actually drop. Li attributed the good news to economic growth and the public and the gov-

ernment paying more attention to such problems as providing assistance to laid-off workers and young job seekers.

However, he said the downward move did not necessarily indicate that unemployment would continue to fall in coming years, because of the possibilities of slowing economic growth, technological improvements and population expansion.

The Pearl River and Yangtze River delta areas faced serious shortages of rural labor last year, Li said. "Many people thought that China had almost infinite supply of rural workers to serve as cheap labor, but the country faced a labor shortage last year. As agriculture develops and farmers' incomes increase, if payment of migrant rural laborers does not improve, that infinite supply will quickly become very finite."

The average wage paid migrants workers in the Pearl River Delta economic zone was 600 yuan a month in 2004, a minimal improvement from 20 years before. "This is very unfair considering how the economy has grown. Enterprise owners and employers must not assume that migrant workers will be willing to work for them forever."

## Other highlights

- More foreign economic relations and trade

The total value of China's imports and exports in 2004 reached \$1.15 trillion, up 35.7% from 2003. The value of exports was \$593.4 billion, up 35.4%, and the value of imports was \$561.4, up 36.0%. As a result, China had a trade surplus of \$32 billion, \$6.5 billion more than in 2003. Some \$60 billion in foreign direct investment was actually utilized, 13.3% more than in 2003. By the end of 2004, China's foreign exchange reserves reached \$609.9 billion, or \$206.7 billion more than at the end of the previous year.

- Rising prices

Consumer prices in 2004 rose 3.9% from 2003. The price of food increased 9.9%, the purchasing prices of raw materials, fuels and power went up 11.4%, producer prices for manufactured goods increased 6.1%, the prices for investment in fixed assets rose 5.6%, and housing prices jumped 9.7%.

- Larger consumer markets

In 2004, total retail sales of consumer goods reached 5.4 trillion yuan, up 13.3% over 2003, for real growth of 10.2% if price factors are deducted. That is one percentage point higher than the growth rate of 2003. Sales in the wholesale and retail industry rose 12.5%, sales in the catering industry increased 21.6%, sales of communications products increased 41.7%, household electric and audio-video appliances 13.7%, motor vehicles 23.4%, and oil and related products 45.9%.

- Households incomes on the rise

The per capita disposable income of urban households in China in 2004 was 9,422 yuan, for 7.7% growth year-on-year, while the per capita net income of rural households was 2,936 yuan, an increase of 6.8% from 2003. Both figures represent the highest income growth rates since 1997. By the end of 2004, the savings deposits of urban and rural households totaled nearly 13 trillion yuan, rising 1.59 trillion from the beginning of the year.

## All Aboard?



Getting a train ticket home for the holidays can be an exhausting process.

Photo by Xinhua

By Dong Nan

Spring Festival, which falls on February 9 is China's most important traditional festival. This year, like every year, huge numbers of migrant workers, college students and employees working outside their hometowns will swamp major cities' transportation systems as they make the annual trip back home to enjoy the holiday with their families.

But there is no assurance that everyone who wants a train ticket back home will be able to get one. Like most Spring Festival seasons, train tickets, especially for long-distance routes, are precious commodities.

To assess this year's situation, *Beijing Youth Daily* surveyed around 600 people in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou to find out how people were traveling and whether they were worried about their chances of getting tickets.

Just over 58.3% of respondents said going home, or heading out on vacation, during Spring Festival was very important to them. The rest said they planned to just stay in place during the holiday. Among those who planned to travel, 67.2% said they would take trains, 13.3% airplanes and 17.2% long-distance buses.

Nearly 45% of the train takers said they would try to get tickets one week in advance, and a more concerned 17% said they would start taking action 20 days ahead of their travel dates.

Among all the respondents, 52.7% believed the difficulty of buying tickets was the biggest headache of Spring Festival train travel, while 27.6% complained most about excessive passenger numbers.

Inability to get a train ticket was an experienced shared by 55.6% of those surveyed. Some 18% said they had previously resorted to buying inflated black market tickets, 20.9% lined up at railway stations overnight to buy tickets; and 43.6% had been forced to take standing-only tickets and spend entire journeys without seats.

## Survey information:

The survey was done among 606 people (201 in Beijing, 200 in Shanghai and 205 in Guangzhou) by Beijing Youth Daily.



The development of agriculture, rural areas and farmers' incomes were major issues at the 12th Beijing People's Congress.

Photo by Cheng Tieliang

## Ten Top Issues at Major Recent Meetings

By Dong Nan

The third meeting of the 10th Beijing Political Consultative Conference and the third meeting of the 12th Beijing People's Congress closed on Thursday. What were the major subjects of discussion at the two annual meetings? *Beijing Youth Daily* conducted a survey to find out.

- Agriculture, rural areas and farmers: 35.6%

Among 73 delegates at the People's Congress, the issues of agriculture, rural areas and farmers were the main topics of concern for 26. China has long faced a problem in developing poor rural areas and closing the growing wealth gap between cities and the countryside.

- Traffic: 34.2%

Beijing's worsening traffic was a problem on nearly everyone's minds at these meetings. Just under 35% of delegates at the conferences said traffic, in terms of traffic jams, road construction, traffic safety, taxi management, traffic laws, bus station distribution, and transportation fees and costs, was their top issue.

- Economy: 28.8%

Topics related to the economy discussed at the meetings included high-tech industry development, sustainable development, water and energy conservation, enterprise reform, public assets supervision, financial risk, opportunities created by China's World Trade Organization entry, government financial and policy support for private enterprises, and technology and brand innovation.

- Education: 27.4%

Central issues on the subject of education included problems at non-state-run schools, teacher wages and quality, education system reform, rural education, moral education, educational charges and junior delinquency.

- Medical care system: 23.3%

Many delegates expressed concerns about Beijing's mental and public health management.

- City construction: 21.9%

Topics included the conflict between city planning and construction, the unbalanced development of northern and southern parts of Beijing, protection of ancient parts of the capital and construction of public facilities and infrastructure such as garbage incinerators and waste disposal sites.

- Social welfare: 20.5%

Areas of concern included insurance of senior citizens, welfare for migrant workers, shorten the gap between the rich and poor and funding social insurance and community medical care.

- Olympic Games: 16.4%

The construction of venues for the 2008 Olympics came up frequently at both meetings.

- Environment: 13.7%

Conservation of water, power and gas and pollution were topics of discussion.

- Community construction: 12.3%

Topics included community management, construction layout, services and security.

Among the 60 Beijing Political Consultative Conference commissioners who participated in the survey, 33.3% cared about transportation issues, 31.7% showed concern about education problems, 26.7% about city construction plans, 21.7% about environmental protection, 20% about the construction of democratic and legal systems, 18.3% about agriculture, rural areas and farmers, 16.7% about social welfare, 10% about housing issues, 8.3% about community construction and 6.7% about the 2008 Olympic Games.



# Doctor Alleges Hospital Corruption

By Zhou Ying

An ordinary doctor from Loudi Central Hospital, Hunan Province wrote a letter on December 6 last year to *Guangming Daily* claiming the hospital was cheating patients, and that it was a direct result of policies issued by the director of the hospital.

China's vice-premier Wu Yi was notified about it by *Guangming Daily* last week, and she demanded an investigation into the issue as soon as possible.

**Quit job after sending letter to media**

Hu Weimin, the head of the interventional cardiology outpatient clinic of Loudi Central Hospital, complained in his letter that while he had spent the last seven years devoting himself to the welfare of his patients, his colleagues in the hospital were more interested in making money. He said he had been subjected to cynicism, threats and violence, so he had decided to quit his job.

After the letter was published, a heated local debate broke out. "Thousands of my former patients signed a letter asking me to stay at the hospital, and Cai Lifeng, Secretary of Loudi Municipal Committee, even came to my office on November 28 and promised me that he would investigate the problem at the hospital," Hu told *Beijing Today* on the phone on Tuesday.

Facing respect from local citizens and repulsion from the hospital at the same time, Hu cannot decide what to do, although he hasn't left the hospital yet.

**Principle or profit?**

"I couldn't bring myself to overcharge patients, so I have little choice but to leave," said Hu. "I have devoted myself to treating patients in the right way, but the head of the hospital treats me as though I behave improperly."

In Hu's letter, he wrote that certain leaders of the hospital were only interested in their patients' money, rather than their health. He said patients were paying more and being treated less effectively as a result.

However, Yang Zhiyi, director of Loudi central hospital, told Xinhua last week that Hu was exaggerating. "What he has done is to spoil the reputation of the hospital, and nearly all the staff are angry about it," he added.

Tan Huaqing, the head of the interventional cardiology department, told Xinhua that Hu is a strange person, given to boasting about his own qualities.

But the patients told Xinhua a different story.

"I have suffered from a cerebral hemorrhage condition since 1996, and all the expensive medicines that were prescribed for me were useless. After I met doctor Hu, I only had to pay 20 yuan per month, and my disease has not bothered me since," said Chen Erchang.

According to Yang Quanjiao, general director of Loudi Public Health Bureau and former head of Loudi central hospital, Hu launched his special clinic in the hospital in 1998 in a shabby room which used to be for coal storage.

"The diseases requiring interventional cardiology depend on good care after the treatment, and some patients have saved a lot of money thanks to Hu's instructions," Yang added.

Yang said that Hu always writes two prescriptions for his patients. One is the medical pre-



Hu's patients feel they can trust him.

Photos by Ouyang HongLiang

scription for the diseases, and on the other he writes down some basic information about simple ways to guard against high blood pressure, coronary heart disease and diabetes.

Yang told *Beijing Today* that Hu gradually became quite famous, and he began to go out of his tiny clinic, entering the community to conduct popularization of medical science. "Hu spent many of his weekends giving treatment to

the patients for free," Yang added.

**New hospital policy**

"I see more than 4,000 patients annually, which is the highest number in our hospital. However, I earn the lowest wage, only 200 yuan per month," Hu complained to *Beijing Today*.

He concluded that it was because he was violating the policy of the new head of the hospital. According to Hu, Yang Zhiyi launched a new policy designed to increase the revenue of the hospital since he got the position in November 2001.

"Simply speaking, the policy encourages doctors to overcharge patients, and the more the doctors can get from the patients, the higher the salary they will receive," Hu explained.

Some doctors from the hospital spoke to *Xiaoxiang Morning Post*, a Hunan-based newspaper, last weekend on condition of anonymity. They said that under this policy, more and more doctors were prescribing imported medicines for patients, or giving them more medicine than they really needed.

*Xiaoxiang Morning Post* also found that the prices of the medicine in the hospital are far higher than in most local pharmacies. "Taking sodium chloride injection as an example, it costs 15 yuan per bottle at the hospital, nearly 10 times higher than the price in the drugstore just 500 meters away," according to the newspaper.

Statistics released by Loudi Audit Bureau in August last year revealed that 73 percent of the medicines in the hospital were bought at a higher price than that stipulated by the rules for medicine purchase. The figures also revealed that the hospital then sold the medicine at a high enough price to make a profit of 11,830,000 yuan between 2002 and 2004.

Hu told *Beijing Today* that he did not even want to associate himself with some of his colleagues, as he considered them immoral. He also hung a wooden sign on the door of his clinic, saying "no brokerage practised here."

"I told the local authorities about the situation at our hospital several times, and the threats soon followed," Hu said. He said he had received threatening letters twice since 2003, and his son was once threatened with a knife.

Many doctors in the hospital resent Hu, according to *Guangming Daily*, because his free treatment in the community has had an impact on their income. Hu says the former head of the interventional cardiology department, Chen Binghua, beat him up in 1999. Hu also says that the injuries he sustained as a result left him impotent. "I got divorced with my wife after that," Hu recalled to *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

He said that he was not the first to want to quit his job in the central hospital. "More than ten doctors have left here since 2002, because the head of the hospital did not attach much importance to medical staff with ability," he explained.

**Reform urgently needed**

Yang Zhiyi, meanwhile, says the situation is merely a case of being realistic about the available funds. "Actually the support the hospital receives from the government is not sufficient," he said. "Frankly, this is a problem shared by most hospitals around the nation."

He told Xinhua that the annual financial support from the government is 3,000,000 yuan, which is only enough to pay for 10 to 20 percent of the staff's salaries.

"If the hospital does not find some ways of making a profit, then the first-class doctors will not stay here, and we will lose more and more patients too," Sun Jiandong, deputy head of the hospital told Xinhua last week.

Hu suggested that the drugstore and hospital should be separated, and that patients should get their medicine from the drugstore after seeing a doctor in the hospital.

"The fact now is that most hospitals are supported by medicine sales. So the problem we need to deal with is that price markups are becoming the main source of revenue," he explained.

Hu said that he will stay in the hospital for a while. "I will continue with my work for now, but I really hope that the situation will improve," Hu said.

By Liu Zhaoxi/Cao Yong

Ma Anqiong stood in the snow at the entrance of the Central Bus Station in Zhaotong, Yunnan, looking for any sign of her four-year-old son. A few weeks before, on December 4 last year, her son had disappeared after going out to play. It was later confirmed that the little boy had been taken by child smugglers.

Ma and her husband had posted numerous "looking for" notes at major transportation terminals around the city. They discovered that there were already many other notes, posted by similarly desperate parents.

**Rampant human smuggling**

People in Zhaotong have become used to seeing missing children posters. A local policeman told *Southern Weekend* that human smuggling had become a common business there. "I feel like they sell kids just like Chinese cabbage," he said.

Zhaotong is not the only place in Yunnan to be blighted by this criminal activity. In Kunming, capital of the province, the kids that are abducted are mainly the children of migrant workers. In Wenshan, Qujing and Zhaotong, many local kids are smuggled. And in Zhaotong, there have even been cases of people selling their own children.

Between 2000 and August 2004, 352 smuggled children were on the records of Kunming police, a figure which is deemed very conservative, since for various reasons less than a quarter of smuggling cases are filed, *Southern Weekend* said.

## Child Smuggling On the Rise

There was even a "smuggling village" in Wenshan, where 75 percent of the adult villagers were found to have taken part in child smuggling between 1993 and 1996. In a 1998 police action, 45 people in the small village, which had 83 families in total, were arrested. They had smuggled at least 104 children.

In the Zhaotong area, there has been a long standing custom of sending abandoned babies to people who wanted children and receiving a reward. This custom is still in practice in some villages and it influences villagers' ideas, a researcher at Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences said.

Women in some remote areas, who have received little or no education, are easily cheated by smugglers. If they lose their children, they often don't think of reporting it to the authorities and give up after searching within a small local range. These backward ideas make it easier for the smugglers to carry out their trade, a professor at Yunnan University told *Southern Weekend*.

**Chain of middle men**

An officer with the Kunming police, whose name was not given, told *Southern Weekend* that child smuggling in Yunnan has become more and more organized. In many cases, smugglers are from one family, and they form a group along with their relatives, neighbors or friends. There are bigger groups controlling the entire process of smuggling across different regions, and smaller ones participating in certain segments.

Smugglers in the initial segment of the chain are those who abduct the children, whether by means of some swindle, kidnap or purchase. They then sell

the children for about 1,000 yuan to people in the next segment, who will transfer the children to smugglers in the next segment for prices five or six times higher. By the time the children finally reach their buyers, the payment is usually ten times the original one.

**More than smuggling**

Two years ago, smuggler Sun Chaoping broke into a villager's home in Zhaotong, beat and injured the adults, and then grabbed their three children. Five years ago, smuggler Feng Huagui snatched a two-year-old boy from another family in Zhaotong after breaking into the home and killing the housewife and her nine-year-old daughter. Later, to avoid the police chasing him, Feng killed the little boy. And ten years ago, Xu Zhigang, a farmer in Zhaotong, lost his son to smugglers who were from his own village. They simply grabbed the boy from his mother's back.

"I've been a policeman for 12 years and I never thought there could be such inhuman things," one Zhaotong policeman told *Southern Weekend*. He said he realized that smugglers have developed into more sophisticated criminals.

In the early years, most smugglers trapped kids with toys or candy. They sometimes also cheated the parents with the excuse of taking the children to play and then not returning. Later, smugglers became more audacious and began to steal kids on all kinds of occasions, so long as there was a chance. Recently, smugglers have become more and more brutal. In many cases, they use violence.

Ma Anqiong said people in Zhaotong now turn pale at the mention of child smuggling. Even during the day, many grandparents are afraid of taking children out into the streets. Young women hold their children's hands tightly when they have to take them out.

**Selling your own child**

In some areas in Zhaotong, some of the children in the hands of smugglers were not abducted, but were sold by their parents. Some of these parents first sold their own children and later became smugglers themselves. The Zhaotong police officer told *Southern Weekend* that in some rural villages of Zhaotong, at least half the villagers have sold their own children. In some remote mountain villages, some families even give birth to children just to sell them.

The officer sometimes asked these parents whether they felt sorry for selling their own children. Usually they said no. "We can't raise the kids anyway. We would rather sell them to others, not only satisfy other people's need for children, but also to make some money for ourselves," they would say.

Poverty is one well-recognized reason for such activities. In many mountain areas in Zhaotong, the land owned by a farmer is less than one mu on average. And conditions on the Yungui Plateau do not exactly allow for a prodigious yield from the land. Many families' annual income is around five hundred yuan.

What is the fate of the smuggled children? Most of them become members of the families that have purchased them, which is the luckiest result for the children. Some are not so lucky. Some die during the transportation due to lack of food and harsh conditions. And some kids are deliberately crippled and put on the streets to make money for their masters by begging.

To fight this crime, a one-hundred-day action was carried out in Kunming, starting in July 2004. As one result of the battle, three child smugglers were executed on December 10. It was the first time in the history of the city that human smugglers had received the death penalty. However, there is still a long way for the local police and government to go to find an effective way to control the smuggling.

(Source from South Weekend)



A child is rescued after police swoop on smugglers

Photo by Zhao Hang



By Hester Xu and Yan Zhang

It should have been the pinnacle of his career, but Wang Jun's prestigious assignment in Hong Kong was ruined by the weather. Sitting in the helicopter cabin, Wang was on the brink of tears. Even today, he still broods over the rain on July 1 1997. It was supposed to be a day of celebration, marking the return of sovereignty over Hong Kong to China.

#### Tricky conditions

Wang had received an order from CCTV to do the aerial shooting for this historic event. According to the schedule, the PLA garrison troops would enter Hong Kong at midnight on July 1 to take over the defence of the former colony from British troops. Wang Jun would be the only person to record the whole process from a helicopter. But one day before, the weather forecast predicted heavy rain, the worst weather conditions for aerial shooting.

Both the pilot and mechanic had been making preparations for this moment for half a year. They asked Wang: "How bad does it have to get for flying to be cancelled?" Wang replied: "We have to do the shoot even if it rains daggers." He knew too well how important their job was, to record one of the most symbolic events in modern China.

On the morning of July 1, the rain was pelting down with the added accompaniment of lightning and thunder. Even the army's helicopters had to remain on the ground on stand-by. But the CCTV helicopter took off. Wang was dumbfounded as soon as the helicopter cleared ground. Lighting stabbed down from the sky, on either side of the helicopter. "The lightning was everywhere and the helicopter was heading towards the center of it," Wang said.

Meanwhile, everything on the ground looked vague, disappearing and then reappearing. The most Wang could make out from the TV monitor were eerie-looking, exploding thunderbolts dancing around the helicopter. Finally the director ordered them to return to base.

"For half a year I prepared for nothing. When I was staring at the lightning on the monitor, I could think of nothing," Wang sighed. After the helicopter returned to the base safely, no one had the heart to celebrate. "I felt really hurt by my bad luck. If only I had had one hour of clear sky..."

Although the live broadcast of the troops entering Hong Kong was unsuccessful, there was a broadcast called *Good Morning Hong Kong* the next day. The rain didn't stop, but the flight was no longer a problem and Wang Jun's shooting went smoothly. The last scene required the helicopter to fly around Victoria Bay three times. The first circle was made without a glitch, and Wang was pleased with the second circle. Entering the third circle, the camera suddenly stopped working.

Returning to the ground, Wang Jun rushed into his room. He sat there until midnight without eating anything. "I know it would have happened to anyone, but it was me who was up there." Still unwilling to accept this result, Wang speaks with a determined voice: "I swear I'll never go back to Hong Kong."

#### An unexpected career

In 1986, Sichuan Civil Aviation College was recruiting students in Beijing before the general entrance examinations for college began. Wang and his classmates applied. First they had to go through a series of physical examinations. Applicants were grouped in 10 and examined one by one. After one examination was passed, the doctor would sign the applicant's name. If the applicant got all the doctors' signatures on the form, it meant he had passed the physical examination. Failure in even one meant elimination.

All of Wang Jun's examinations went well until his blood pressure was



# The Flying Cameraman



Preparing for a new shoot in Shanghai

Photos provided by Wang Jun

measured. Although he had never had high blood pressure, his blood pressure shot up to 140 during the examination. The doctor asked him to relax and take a rest before having another try. When he did it again, it jumped to 152. Wang couldn't understand, his blood pressure had always been 120, how could it become so high? Without a signature from the doctor, Wang was immediately eliminated. Although his score for the entrance examination was way above the admission cut-offs, Wang lost the opportunity to become a pilot. His blood pressure has not averaged above 130 since then. He said: "This might be fate."

As his application for civil aviation college failed, Wang's classmates told him that Hunan Broadcast and TV School was recruiting students to study TV broadcasting, a special course set up by CCTV. They said: "you can apply for this course. There are a lot of videos you can watch at CCTV, then we can all borrow them from you." Knowing nothing about TV broadcasting, Wang applied for the school with 7 or 8 classmates.

Recalling his entrance

examination for college, Wang Jun chuckled: "Later on, my other classmates made it to college or university. But I didn't do so well in the examinations so I 'dropped behind' in this school. I simply thought I could at least secure a job by doing this course, and my family felt this way too." During the summer vacation, Wang returned to Beijing and went to CCTV for a practice. But he slipped out of the TV station after staying there for less than 20 minutes. The job was so tough that he decided to quit. But this was easier said than done. In a time when all jobs were designated by the state, Wang had little choice, so when he graduated in 1988, he had to force himself to take the job with CCTV. He worked in a TV transmission van for 9 years.

#### Up, up and away

At the end of 1996, CCTV decided to do a live broadcast for the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty with an aerial shoot. Wang was picked as the aerial cameraman. The TV station ordered WESCAM equipment from Canada, the most advanced aerial video shooting system, and sent Wang over for training.

In early 1997, after three days of theory study and a couple of simulated runs on the ground, Wang went up in the air in a helicopter. Having learned to control the camera quite well on the ground, Wang didn't expect it to be too hard.

He was asked to shoot a church from the helicopter. Although he had no difficulty finding the church with his eyes, the church seemed to escape the camera. With the helicopter constantly on the move, when he saw the church, it had already moved out of the camera's visual field. Wang tried to capture it in vain for five minutes until the pilot helped him locate the church. The pilot told him, since it's very easy to lose the sense of orientation and position in the air, it's better to place an imaginary clock dial in the mind and refer the position of the object on the ground to the time indicated on the clock. Two weeks later, Wang returned to Beijing.

Wang's first practice of aerial shooting was the live broadcast of a famous Hong Kong stuntman jumping over the Hukou Falls on the Yellow River on a motorcycle on June 1, 1996.

Since it was his first solo assignment, Wang felt quite nervous. For safety reasons, two helicopters were prepared, one for the real shoot, the other on standby. Just as the helicopter was doing the live broadcast, a sandstorm suddenly whipped up. The pilot saw a dark mass quickly approaching from the distance, and soon the wind started. He had to land the aircraft.

Having just made a few flights, Wang didn't realize how strong the wind was. As the helicopter was flying back to the base, he began to watch the scenes he had shot and found several shots were not very satisfactory. So he told the pilot he'd placed the helicopter in the wrong position for one shot, and it would look better if he could go back and do it again. The pilot, meanwhile, was

preoccupied with avoiding the sandstorm, and hearing what Wang said, he snapped: "Hold it, tell me later!" Wang was startled and wondered why the pilot was so rude. They'd seemed to be getting along pretty well up until that point.

When the helicopter landed, the pilot explained to Wang that they had been hit by a strong gust and that he was trying very hard to take the helicopter over a hilltop, and that they could have crashed at any moment. Wang realized he had misunderstood him.

#### Hardships behind success

To an outsider, aerial shooting might seem a very interesting job, but actually it's a high risk profession.

In 2002, Wang was sent to shoot a story by the Three Gorges dam. He started from the upper reaches and continued down the river. His idea was to shoot the narrow gorge first, then follow the river that widens abruptly after passing a series of beautiful gorges. Just as the helicopter came out of the narrowest place at Kuimen, a high voltage line suddenly appeared before them.

Since the helicopter had been flying at very low altitude, the high voltage line caught them by total surprise. The pilot used all his strength but couldn't pull up the helicopter. He had no choice but to push the aircraft down to cross the line from beneath. No one on the helicopter made a sound, they all know what would happen if the aircraft touched a high voltage line.

In the summer of 2004, he went to Guangzhou to shoot a program on the successful application for the Asian Olympic Games. Guangzhou was seized by a rare heat wave that day, but Wang had to work continuously for seven hours under the sun. The ground in the airport is paved with concrete, and the surface temperature reached above 50 degrees Celsius. The crew had

to hydrate themselves by mixing salt with their mineral water.

When people hear that Wang works as an aerial cameraman for CCTV, they usually feel envious. But no one knows the risks and hardships associated with the job.

When asked by *Beijing Today* whether his family supports him, Wang says: "supportive is the best way to put it, actually they just can't help it." The 37 year-old Wang has a five year-old son. He didn't want a child at first. After he began to do aerial shooting, his wife said to him: "you often go away for months, it's better for me to raise a child than to feel lonely at home." So they had a son.

Talking about his son, Wang comes alive with overflowing joy. But he can't conceal a trace of regret. "Once I went home from a business trip. It was already very late at night and my son was sound asleep. When I woke him up, the first thing he said was: 'Dad, when are you going away again?' I looked at him in amazement. I didn't expect that my son would be so used to my not staying at home." His son always asks: "Dad, why do you always go away for such a long time?" To make up for his absence, Wang takes his son out to play whenever he has a chance to stay at home. Wang often returns home one day before a public holiday and has to leave as soon as the holiday ends.

Wang has now flown 1,100 hours in seven years. Talking about his future, he jokes: "There's nothing else I can do. If I was to go to the job fair, I don't even know what kind of job I should look for. People there wouldn't want me either." Or he would change his tone and speak in a good-humored way: "for our profession, living one day is one day's gain. There isn't any future in it." Still, he hopes to finish 3,000 hours aerial shooting and raise his skills to international standards.





# Emo China,

# A NEW ROCK TREND

By Li Duoduo/Ye Shan

With “emo” music, if not exactly taking the world by storm, at least still refusing to disappear altogether, underground Beijing band Tookoo reunited early last year, and is now the foremost exponent of – emo with Chinese characteristics.

For the uninitiated, emo, known to some as “emotional rock,” is based around the Nirvana thing of playing really quiet, then REALLY LOUD, then really quiet again ... then REALLY LOUD, then ... you get the idea ...

Tookoo has just concluded an eight-city live tour around China. Billed as the “revolution of emotions” tour, the band aims at converting all Chinese fans of rock music to the cause.

“In China, there may not be so many people who know much about this kind of music. However, through the Revolution of Emotions Live Tour 2004, we learned that more and more young people begun to like our music. Although they might have barely had any touch with emo before, the enthusiasm they showed when we played live was the best proof of being ‘infected.’ Nowadays, the Chinese rock music market is in a low state. What people need is just a kind of new sound,” Tookoo singer Yan Shuai said at a press conference after the tour.

On December 18, the band’s performance at Littlebar, a club in Chongqing, marked the high point of the tour. A popular venue for live rock and roll, over 200 people packed into the small space.

The band presented a pure, complete process of emotional release; In true emo style, Yan went from singing normally during the quiet bits, to crying and screaming at the top of his lungs, giving the audience a vivid show of emo rock music, both aurally and visually.

Also in accordance with emo tradition, during the quiet bits, the band would perform with their backs to the audience, turning around as the sound reached a crescendo, shaking, jumping and generally being vigorous. Yan would start singing (or screaming, as appropriate) regardless of where he was on stage in relation to the microphone. The audience responded in kind, resulting in a scene of mass emotional bonding, mayhem, and good rock and roll fun.

Live gigs in other cities, including Wuhan, Shanghai, Xi’an and Hangzhou, were similarly successful, with a number of local bands being converted on the spot and launching into impromptu emo-inspired musical forays.

Despite being a relatively new phenomenon in China, emo, as suggested earlier, has a solid pedigree. Bands such as Rites of Spring, Embrace, Gray Matter, Ignition, Dag Nasty, Monsula, Fugazi (to a degree), Jawbreaker, Elliot, Friction, Kerosene 454 to name just a few, are credited with its creation. Starting in the Washington DC area in 1984-85, it spread San Francisco in 1989, then all over the Midwest, Florida and Northeast.

The central tenet is the guitars – two, usually distorted,



Tookoo live at Littlebar, Chongqing

Photos by Cai Ming

strummed mostly in unison, with occasional catchy riff highlights. This became known as the “classic DC sound,” along with the octave chords that later became a staple of the genre.

Another key factor is that most emo bands play Gibson Les Paul guitars, definitely not Stratocasters, and mostly favor Marshall JCM-800 amps.

Tookoo is not a new band in Chinese rock field. Founded in 1999, it has been through two major changes in lineup and musical direction.

In May 2004, the band took part in both the Chaoyang Music Festival and an activity titled “Who is Singing in Spring,” held at New Get Lucky Bar.

Within a year, their maxi-single *Ever Go With Me* was included in a mixed-album called *Rock Beijing 4/5*, and the band released their first album, *Live in Nameless Highland*.

After five years of hard work, today’s Tookoo, with new faces and musical style, still hold on to their belief in rock music and continue working hard for their goal.

“Whatever the fashion of future tends to be, we will never go against our original intention of playing rock music, neither will we change our style to meet popular demands or fit in with commercial standards,” promises Yan Shuai.

## Art of Congestion

By Gareth George

Just when you thought it couldn’t creep in anywhere else, traffic has found an unlikely new home at the Courtyard Gallery. Mercifully, and with a nod to the nerves of their wealthy dining clientele, it’s all in the name of art, darling. Don’t expect a dose of fumes with your Eight Treasure Couscous. Meg Maggio, the gallery director, has gathered four artists (Chen Wenbo, Liu Wei, Yang Yong and Zhu Jia) to exhibit their interpretations on the theme of traffic. And perhaps within the Courtyard’s basement studio is the way we’d all like to view road plankton – artfully shot arterial light streams sans noise or odor.

Yet the exhibition is worth more than a pat on the back for being a congestion free haven – although with an unobstructed view of the icy imperial moat and the red arched towers of the Forbidden City, it performs this function with a relaxed panache.

Mixing traditional paint and canvas with small installations and photography, it’s a low key affair, and, aside from some unnerving sound effects, deathly quiet in comparison to Beijing’s dusty highways. Maggio explains. “All the artists are well known, they have shown work in Shanghai, Tianjin and the Venice Biennale, but have not been shown in Beijing.” The gallery likes to strike up a relationship with artists over a number of years. “We like to show artists that may be unfamiliar to people here. In this case we came up with the theme – traffic – and let the artists show works they thought were appropriate.”

Sichuan artist Yang Yong provides photographs that fit the profile. Linear, bookend like and immobile, a woman and a tower block frame the neon flash flood in his *Anonymous Stills* (2 works, 2003). If this seems a little predictable, (although beautifully shot,) less so are the four large blister pack style pill pods that dominate the back wall (Content; toy figures, plexi, stainless, steel). The toy figures, like colored powder from a distance, hint at the future, sex and femininity and Chinese myth. An allusion to the accessibility and purveyance of consumer culture, perhaps? A cheap hit of “now” administered by the dose, streaming through every artery. Certainly an imaginative interpretation of the theme.

That aside, if you’ve ever been walled in at an intersection, you’ll be rapt by the sinister, alien goldfish (*Related to Environment*; Beta, 20 minutes, Edition 4, 1997) projected onto the gallery floor – flapping sound effects and all. “This piece has never been seen in Beijing” Maggio said, and the artist, Zhu Jia, ought to be commended. It’s far and away the most interesting thing here.

The thing is, while providing a pleasant showcase for Chinese artists – and in an environment where they’re likely to be exposed to wealthy Western buyers – the theme feels a little loose. The lack of any commissioned works leaves a feeling that perhaps some of the artists were more keen to get something in the show, rather than something relevant.

It’s proximity to the Forbidden City means the Courtyard ought to see plenty of curious passers by, and the restaurant deserves its reputation as one of Beijing’s finest. But the work here just doesn’t have enough energy for the gallery to be worth a trip in itself. If it’s contemporary Chinese art you’re after, you’ll find it hotter and fresher at Dashanzi.



Amateur Go, Chen Wenbo, oil and acrylic on canvas



## What to do Tomorrow?

By Liu An

Can three men act out a story by themselves? Some might be sceptical, but a drama named *Feichang Majiang* (*Unusual Mah-jong Game*) was performed very successfully by three men, showing an attractive and thoughtful story. The drama was staged for the TNT mini theatre opening ceremony in Chaoyang District from last Friday to this Monday.

Directed by China's leading conceptual dramatist Li Liuyi from Beijing People's Art Theatre, the show stars Wu Gang (as big brother), Hanqing (as third brother) and Lin Xiyue (as little brother). This is the fourth production of *Feichang Majiang* since its successful debut in 2000, when it was favored both by critics and the box office. In 2001, *Feichang Majiang* went to Tokyo as part of the BeSeTo theatre festival and earned the appreciation of Japanese and Korean dramatists.

Four men plan to get together to play majiang, having decided to give it up after one final game. Three of them gather and wait for the second brother for the final game at midnight. They ring him many times, but there's no response. Then they start to guess where the second brother is. They try analyzing his behavior that day. While waiting,



Photo provided by Nine Theatre

they also describe their yesterdays, today and hopes for tomorrow. "What to do tomorrow?" is a question asked with trepidation many times during the play. Along with the fear of tomorrow's uncertainty, suspicion also emerges. Of course, it's just like an intangible form of Majiang.

The stage design was simple but very fitting for the small theatre stage. A Majiang table with four chairs, a tea table, a TV and a telephone is all that's required for the atmosphere to build.

When *Feichang Majiang* was first staged in 2000, it starred He Bing (as little brother), Wu Gang (as big brother) and Feng Yuanzheng (as third brother), all from Beijing People's Art Theatre. Their powerful performance attracted and impressed audiences so much that He Bing's performance as little brother was still in people's memory even after five years. The current performance hasn't changed too much from the first production. An audience member who had watched both the first play in 2000 and last Friday's said "Wu Gang's performance was as good as the first in presenting an experienced and astute big brother. But the young actor from National Drama Theatre, Lin Xiyue, was not as incisive and vivid as He Bing."

One pity was that the stage was in the middle, surrounded on four sides by the audience. So there was always one section of the audience that could see nothing but the backs of the actors. However, the fascination of *Feichang Majiang* was that after watching, each audience member would have their own understanding and appreciation of it.



Photo by Cui Jun



Photos by Tian Yufeng

## Lighting up the City

By Pan Hao

Dancing till the last note of the music and to the final drum beat as if they would never run out of steam; that is what these dancers from Turkey did in the Great Hall of the People last Thursday night.

Directed by dance guru Mustafa Erdogan, who has been well known since his debut show *Sultans of the Dance* in 1997, the story of *The Fire of Anatolia* is based on the Greek myth about Prometheus giving the secret of fire to mankind.

Featuring more than 60 dancers, the show comprises music collected from almost every region of Turkey. The first act of the show hit the audience with its tremendous sound and visuals as soon as the music began. The powerful drum beats along with male dancers' muscular style and uncompromising precision told the audience that this was to be a show full of infectious energy.

If you have seen Michael Flatley's *River Dance*, or *The Lord of the Dance*, you would notice a few borrowed items; it's not too surprising seeing as *River Dance* partly inspired Erdogan's *Sultans of the Dance*. Diversity was the word to describe the dance styles, with Turkish folk dance, some ballet, funky dance and of course belly dance. Sinem Guven led the performance of the belly dance in one of the highlights of the show, and was simply jaw-dropping. Sexy, probably, is the only word that could do justice to her fast, wild, yet stylish dance.

Music was of a typical middle eastern flavor. The percussion was skilled and superb, with many ethnic elements. There were dozens of dancers playing percussion instruments together in one scene in act two, and it was fun and enjoyable for the audience. A huge collection of costumes were used during the show, mainly in traditional Turkish folk style.

All in all, if you liked *River Dance*, you'll enjoy *The Fire of Anatolia*, a splendid ethnic dance extravaganza.

## A Samurai Tragedy



By Pan Hao

This drama begins with a dream of a fight in which everyone is killed, and ends with the dream coming true. Ryuzanji Company's new version of Japanese Kabuki classic *The Love Crazy Samurai* presented a grim view of the circle of destiny to the audience at North Theatre last Thursday.

Directed by Show Ryuzanji, there were a few deviations from the script of the original, written by Namboku Tsuruya 180 years ago. For instance, the main male characters were played by actresses, with Hiroko Ito as Gengobei Satsuma and Saori Aoki as Sangoro Sansanoya. It seems appropriate to the troubled times we live in today, with everyone drawn into the conflict.

The story is about revenge, and blended with love, hate, greed, cruelty and destiny. The show successfully explored these themes as it followed Fuwa Kazuemon, a masterless samurai in search of the 100 Ryo (gold Japanese money) that has been stolen.

The money is like a set of foot prints through the play, leading to various evils of human nature. "Money is an energy in human society," said Ryuzanji before the show. But all is not doom and gloom with his version. In the original, all the main characters get killed, but in Ryuzanji's version, Sangoro's son survives the slaughter. "There have been many disasters recently, like 9/11, and the war in Iraq, so I wanted to leave a note of hope for the audience," said Ryuzanji.

The play was first staged in 1825 during Japan's Edo period. Ryuzanji's version sticks largely to the original framework, but with some contem-

porary twists. There is singing, dancing and sword fighting in the play. A complex variety of musical styles have been chosen, including Irish music, rock and even jazz, although traditional Japanese music is dominant. Actually, the music used in the play has been changing over the years and in the course of various tours of the production. Makoto Honda, music director for *The Love Crazy Samurai*, played the parts of a few characters as well as instruments in the play. He said, "I choose the music according to my personal taste, and if I find something that sounds good, then I will add it to my list. We have both live and recorded music, and I expect to use other kinds of music in the future."

In one scene, a tap dance was performed by the actors and actresses who were wearing wooden slippers. "We put in everything we think is good. For instance we used Korean percussion and Chinese Luo," said Ryuzanji. Though it might sound bizarre, the mix of musical styles and performance works surprisingly well.

The fierce sword fights are a well known element of Kabuki, but Ryuzanji's version emphasized the relationship between the characters rather than action scenes, giving the play amazing clarity and dignity, despite the bloodshed.

The costume designs were traditional Japanese, simple colours with precise lines. The samurai robes were particularly stylish. The stage design and effects were simple but it all worked very well. And in the end of course, the two women nail the men who are all fooled and ruined by lust and greed.

## Dunhuang My Dreamland

By Jacqueline Yu

This legendary story of Dunhuang has it all: legend, a love story and moving music. *Dunhuang My Dreamland*, a new version of this dance, originally produced three years ago by Lanzhou Song and Dance company, was performed from last Wednesday to Sunday at Beijing Exhibition Theatre (Beizhan Theatre).

The whole story derives from the discovery of a Taoist monk named Wang Yuanlu who, according to legend, accidentally found a hidden library in Cave 17 of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu Province some 2,100 kilometers from Beijing. The curtain draws up on a thin young man, named Mogao, who takes to the Dunhuang road (Silk Road) to pursue his artistic passions. He particularly hopes to see the Flying Apsaras (Feitian) depicted in the Mogao Grotto. In fact, a large part of the group dance choreography by Chen Weiya is adapted from the Flying Apsaras depicted in the Mogao Grottoes.

The story has classic themes of love and loss. The young painter Mogao (Liu Zhen) is wounded while crossing a desert, and his life hangs in the balance. A passer-by, our heroine Yueya (Tian Qing), a general's daughter, saves him. Soon, they meet again in Dunhuang and fall in love. The fierce general is opposed to such a profitless match and forces Yueya to choose a wealthier husband. So Yueya decides to elope with her true love. Mogao and Yueya are then trapped in a cave, surrounded by the general's army. Bloodied and burned, Yueya saves Mogao's life again but surrenders her own. With her sacrificial death she is transformed into a spring from which Mogao draws spring water. Thus nourished, he finishes the incomparable murals now found in the cave, producing art from the depths of great sorrow. So the Mogao Grotto and the Yueya Spring represent the joining of love and art forever.

Liu performed well as the pure and persevering Mogao. His pas de deux with Tian Qing in Act IV (in the cave surrounded by Yueya's father's army) was fluent and moving. The group dance was pleasant, especially in Act Three, when a ball is held at which Yueya must choose a husband. Each rich prince shows Yueya his wealth and power, and Mogao, with mask on, leads a group of female dancers. One false note was the peculiar choice by the choreographer of a group of children dancers to perform as some Flying Apsaras.

The old, colorful town of Dunhuang, a bustling active town along the Silk Road in ancient China, and the big cave grottoes were brought to life by designer Gao Guangjian, with added colors and emotion from Sha Xiaolan's lighting. The music of Zhang Qianyi – using Chinese traditional instruments *Zheng*, *Pipa*, and *Xiao* as well as a western orchestra – is pleasant to hear.



Photo by Tian Yufeng



# Job Fairs Go Online

By Xie Lixue

Crammed recruiting booths, crowds of students and piles of discarded pamphlets, this is the reality of job fairs in recent years. The mess and noise reduces the communication possibilities between job seekers and recruiters. With the growth of the Internet, though, both sides are turning to the online job application system for its fast speed, latest information and easy access.

From February 22 to March 6, the New Year Internet recruiting fair will be held on e2ejob.com, which demonstrates the tendency of a regulated online market.

**Booming field**

According to statistics released by the Ministry of Education, the number of graduates in 2005 will reach 3,380,000 nationwide, and 155,000 in Beijing.

"Accompanied with the heated job market, the online job fairs have developed rapidly," Tian Zhengsuo, director of the Beijing Personnel Bureau, told *Beijing Youth Daily*. Currently, many companies are inclined to recruit online to avoid wasting time and money. Websites such as ChinaHR.com, zhaopin.com and 51job.com who offer job services have shot up and become the portal websites for recruitment.

"Generally, the evaluation of a good Internet recruitment is considered by the click rate and the satisfaction reported by companies," said Wang Jian, a consultant with 51job.com, adding that their satisfaction rate could often achieve 80 percent and that feedback from recruiters seemed good.

**Regulation required**

Although the online service is convenient and fast,



Online job fairs are the result of the rapid growth of commercial job-hunting websites. Photo by 51job.com

some problems also arise. For instance, invalid job offers, outdated or unreliable information and unsafe databases for personal documents. In addition, many students felt that most of the resumes published online go nowhere, citing few opportunities for interviews. As a result, the

local administration has required websites to obtain a license before opening such services.

Tian said that this year, they would put efforts into promoting the online application system, establishing a human resources database, and form a service network for companies and applicants.

"The websites should first obtain permission to operation from the Personal Bureau, just like career consulting agencies. Second, they must be awarded the qualification to run the online system. Third, all the information published on the Internet should be recorded and filed with the Personal Bureau."

In order to make sure that the applicants can know about the latest job vacancies, Jin Hui, manager of e2ejob.com, said the website will keep the news provided by a thousand companies for about two weeks, and update the information whenever possible.

## New CV on Internet

The new video resumes that first emerged in Beijing this year are expected to make up for some of the disadvantages of the traditional self-introductions released online.

According to Han Chunguang, over 90 percent of HR managers agree that compared with the paper ones, video CVs can help them evaluate the candidates with their image and performance, and in return, the applicants will have more possibility to gain an interview and get job offers.

Jin said that during the New Year Internet recruiting fair, they would produce video CVs for students free of charge.

Liu Hao, CEO of zhaopin.com voiced the opinion that the online form would not replace the traditional ones. "For the preparing stage of sending CVs and announcing the new jobs, the websites have a great advantage. However the interaction at job fairs can help both sides better understand each other, which the Internet can hardly compete with."

## Talking jobs and corporate culture

# Opportunities in Banking Sector

## What White-collars Want

By Zhao Hongyi

More than 40 percent of white-collars believe they have to recharge themselves in the new year, according to a survey by zhaopin.com, one of China's most prominent job-hunting websites.

Only 10 percent want to change companies in 2005, a decrease of 6 percent from 2004. Twelve percent of the surveyed want an entirely new career, decreasing from last year's 18 percent.

Meanwhile, 12 percent are expecting a promotion, and 15 percent are expecting salary rises in the new year, both up from last year's 9 percent.

Another 5 percent complain they have to work more hours in the office and hope to work less. This is a slight increase from last year's 3 percent.

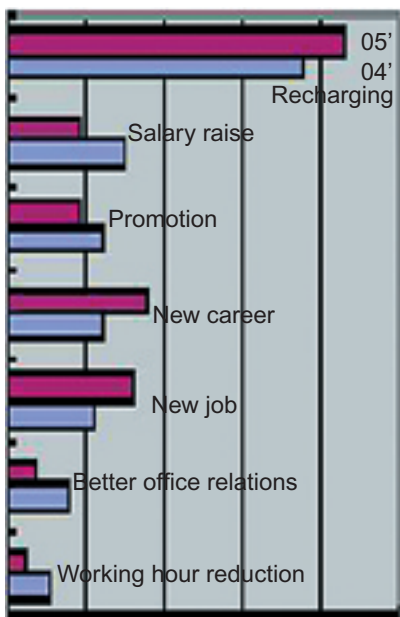
And 8 percent realize they have to improve relations with their bosses in the new year, 5 percent higher than before.

Relations with colleagues seems to be an area where there is much room for improvement. Forty-three percent believe their relations with colleagues are "serious and no-nonsense." Thirty-two percent complain they have been dragged into "under-the-table battles" with colleagues. Only 25 percent say they are enjoying "light, friendly and helpful" relations in their offices.

The anticipated working life for Chinese also seems to be getting shorter, the survey indicates. Seventy-eight percent believe young people between 25 and 35 are the major workforce, 11 percent believe people under 25 are also important, while 12 percent admit that those older than 35 are also important.

Zhaopin.com conducted the survey of over 5,000 officer workers throughout the country at the end of last year and released the results earlier this month.

### What White-collars Want?



Source: zhaopin.com

Established in 1987, China Merchants Bank is China's first joint stock bank operated as a corporation. Currently, the bank has 33 main branches around the nation with total capital of 540 billion yuan.

Utilizing advanced technologies, the bank requires professionals not only from the banking-related fields, but also a wide range of other industries. Human resources manager of CMB Ding Wei chatted with students on www.54club.com and answered questions about the bank's recruitment plan and the banking industry.

### Regular recruitment:

**Q: Could you introduce details of this year's recruitment plan?**

**Ding Wei:** Every year, we have a regular recruitment plan for prospective graduates. We are going to hire 800 throughout the country this year. Of course, the individual branch offices set their employment levels in light of business development. In Shenzhen, we will have 150 people with some of them working at the bank's headquarters. Other positions are in information technology, general management, customer services, sales and marketing and professional technology.

**Q: As for the candidates, do you have any standards for them?**

**Ding:** We hope many excellent graduates can join us. I know that the competition between young people to find good jobs has become fierce. In addition, many students have overseas study experiences, for instance, some of them returned after financial training with a domestic working background. Thus maybe the selection seemed somewhat higher for some of the applicants.

The business of personal financial management is one of our directions for the future development. Therefore, we are



Ding Wei, HR manager of CMB  
Photos by sina.com

going to hire a group of masters and give them training especially on this area.

### Require diversity:

**Q: I majored in e-business, can I find a job in your bank?**

**Ding:** Yes, absolutely. Now we have the online banking business operation that is relatively advanced in China. This system has been nominated for the 21st century's contribution award by the CIP (Computer Integrated Processing) Organization.

**Q: You have said that CMB needs some professionals in the IT field.**

**Could you give more detail?**

**Ding:** Because from headquarters to every branch office, our network needs professionals to develop and maintain it. People specializing in communications, network, software development and other fields are required.

Currently, we have many colleagues who have ten-year experience in the systematic development and management and our financial electronic research center provides them space to improve.

**Q: I have worked in software development in banks, and then I shifted to the economic field. Do I have any advantages?**

**Ding:** Of course, for the banking business, we need inter-majored staff, because our clients come from various industries. As a result, we not only need to possess knowledge of saving or loans, but also understand the code in other areas.

### Advice for graduates:

**Q: What do you think of today's university students?**

**Ding:** Nowadays, students are confident in expressing their ideas and thoughts, they have broad horizons and knowledge. But their disadvantage is they lack the spirit of hard work, and they need to strengthen the ability to work under high pressure.

**Q: The situation for job-hunters this year seemed very tough. Could you give some advice?**

**Ding:** Students need to have a good attitude and the ability to handle hardships and setbacks.

It's not bad that many students have great expectation for their jobs. But sometimes, they must get down to the reality, and change their attitude. When they are already to meet difficulties, they are competent for the competition in the job market. (Edited by Xie Lixue)

## 2005 Innovation Awards



British Ambassador Christopher Hum (back row, center) with the winners

Photo by Xie Lixue

By Xie Lixue

The 2005 British Chamber of Commerce in China Entrepreneurship and Innovation Awards were held Tuesday at Beijing's Hilton Hotel. The event was held to recognize British-educated Chinese who are managing enterprises in Beijing.

In the Innovative Enterprise category, the winners were: first – Tasly Pharmaceutical Co, second – Venturepharm Laboratories Limited, a pharmaceutical company, and third – Oxford Instruments, a British company that makes and sells

medical and analytical instruments.

In the start-up company category, the winners were: first – Beijing Toptimes TV and Film Investment, a privately owned TV and Film investment company; second – Mahayana Technology, a solutions provider for radio frequency identification technology, third – Edstream, a company delivering training and education over the Internet.

An additional prize was presented to Victoria Healthcare, a gynecology and obstetrics hospital for most promising start-up.

## Seeking Employment

Laid-off workers are providing PC maintenance services such as system upgrade, virus detection and removal, data copying and recovering, system utilization and security. Please call: 6732 7217

A self-motivated, patient, enthusiastic, active and diligent Beijing boy seeking a job as business interpreter, manager assistant, public relation representative, business service advisor, human resource official, office secretary.

Fluent English, excellent communication capability and command skills in computer.

Contact Yang Yang at: 13811243074

Email: ivan1339@sina.com

Chen Yurong, Ph. D of consuming psychology and master of economics, has been a house-keeper, reporter, editor, economic researcher, market analyzer and promoter. Currently, I am the general manager's assistant at the Zhejiang-based Zhengbei (Pearl) Co. Ltd. and manager for development planning at Beijing Zhenbei Sci & Tech Co. Ltd. I'm looking for a better job.

Please visit my personal website at: www.chenyurong.com, or call me at: 010-6707 4612, 13651033853.

My email is: cyr@chenyurong.com, cyr@zhenbeiy.com.

## Situations Vacant

Shanghai Whyte Asia Pioneer Pharmaceutical Ltd. is looking for Instrumentation and Automation Engineers, Chemical Engineers, Research & Development Managers, Chemists, Microbiologists, Chemical Analysts, Process Development Chemists, Chemical Products Sourcing Executives, and Web Masters. Contact: Mr. Zhou at: 021-6120 3156

PC sale persons and repairers wanted. New graduates and veterans preferred. 800 yuan minimum salary. Contact: Peng Yu, Tel: 010-6281 7569

Cheap webmasters available at your call. Whenever you have problems with your PC, contact Miss Yuan and Miss Jing at: 010-6281 7129, 6281 7127. Visit us at: www.dfit.com.cn

I barely have time to use my 80sqm new furnished flat, which is suitable for single professional working in China World Center area. Please SMS 13581612019 and I will call you back.

The Jiangsu-based YOSO Electronics (www.yoso.com.cn) invites agents nationwide for its products of CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, COMBOs, CD-R/RWs, and DVD-R/RWs. Interested? Contact: Mr. Li at 0510-271 4856, 238 8339, 13812525708

A Beijing-based English newspaper is looking for reporters, freelancers and editors.

Chinese applicants should have university degrees in English or related majors and media experience.

Foreigners from the UK and US with relevant media experience preferred.

Please send your resumes and writing samples to: hr@ynet.com



Melbourne, Australia, one of the biggest cities in the southern hemisphere, is home to Monash University.

It is reputed worldwide for its creative research and academic quality and stands committed to top-notch teaching, learning and research in an innovative and international environment.

Monash University is the largest and most internationalized university in Australia. It has more than 49,500 students in on-campus and off-campus courses.

This Monday, Dr. Don Gregg, general manager international of Monash University, took part in Splendid Australia, a series of online discussions in *Beijing Today's* Study Abroad Salon.

#### Basics of Monash University:

**Monash sounds like a person's name. Is that right? Can you give us a brief history of your university?**

—tboy.sina.com.cn

Named after prominent Australian Sir John Monash, Monash University was established by an Act of Parliament in 1958, making it the first university to be established in the state of Victoria (of which Melbourne is the capital city) for 106 years.

**What are the strongest faculties and subjects at Monash University?**

—uibegraduate1105

Monash is recognized for teaching, learning and research excellence in several different areas.

balance between theory and practice and links to industry projects throughout all 10 faculties. Our teaching staff are internationally renowned and work at the leading edge of their fields. Monash's facilities are among the best in Australia and the world.

#### Research programs and semesters:

**Please talk about the research programs at Monash University.**

—redwolf

Research study gives you the opportunity to explore questions that you find stimulating. With the guidance of your supervisor, you determine the topic, structure and pace of your program.

By studying a research program, students can gain a deeper understanding of their chosen fields of study, focus on specific issues, test certain theories and expand their knowledge.

Some research programs in our wide range of options combine research with professional experience and/or coursework.

The research programs in Monash University include: master's by research, professional doctorates, doctor of philosophy (PhD) and external PhDs.

**How many semesters do you have? If I applied now and got in, when would I start my studies?**

—991009

At Monash, the normal university year is divided into two semesters, with classes over a

Splendid Australia:

# Australia's Most Largest, International Uni



Dr. Don Gregg

Monash has 10 different faculties: art and design, arts, business and economics, education, engineering, IT, law, medicine, nursing and health sciences, pharmacy and science.

More information about the programs available at these faculties (including a master's in international business within the faculty of BusEco) can be found here:

<http://www.monash.edu/international/>

**How many campuses do you have? Where are they located? What are their environments like? What subjects are taught in the different campuses?**

—grapewine

Monash has six campuses in and around Melbourne (Clayton, Caulfield, Berwick, Peninsula, Parkville and Gippsland). The university also has campuses in Malaysia and South Africa and centers in Prato, Italy and London.

#### Advantages of the university:

**Compared with the other seven universities of Australia's Group of Eight, what do you think are the advantages of Monash University?**

—JackieZhang

The employment rate among Monash graduates is one of the highest in Australia, and our graduates enjoy above average salary levels. Monash offers quality programs with a

14-week period. The semesters this year run from February 25 to June 4 (semester 1) and July 18 to October 21 (semester 2), with exam periods following each of these.

For many students, the preparation to study abroad takes some time as there are several steps involved in the process: submitting an application (including academic transcripts), sitting for an English proficiency test (IETLS), applying for a visa....

The preparation process can vary in length, depending on your personal situation. Some students who do not meet the direct academic requirements for entry into a university program, for example, may need to undertake an English preparation program at the Monash University English Language Center before they commence.

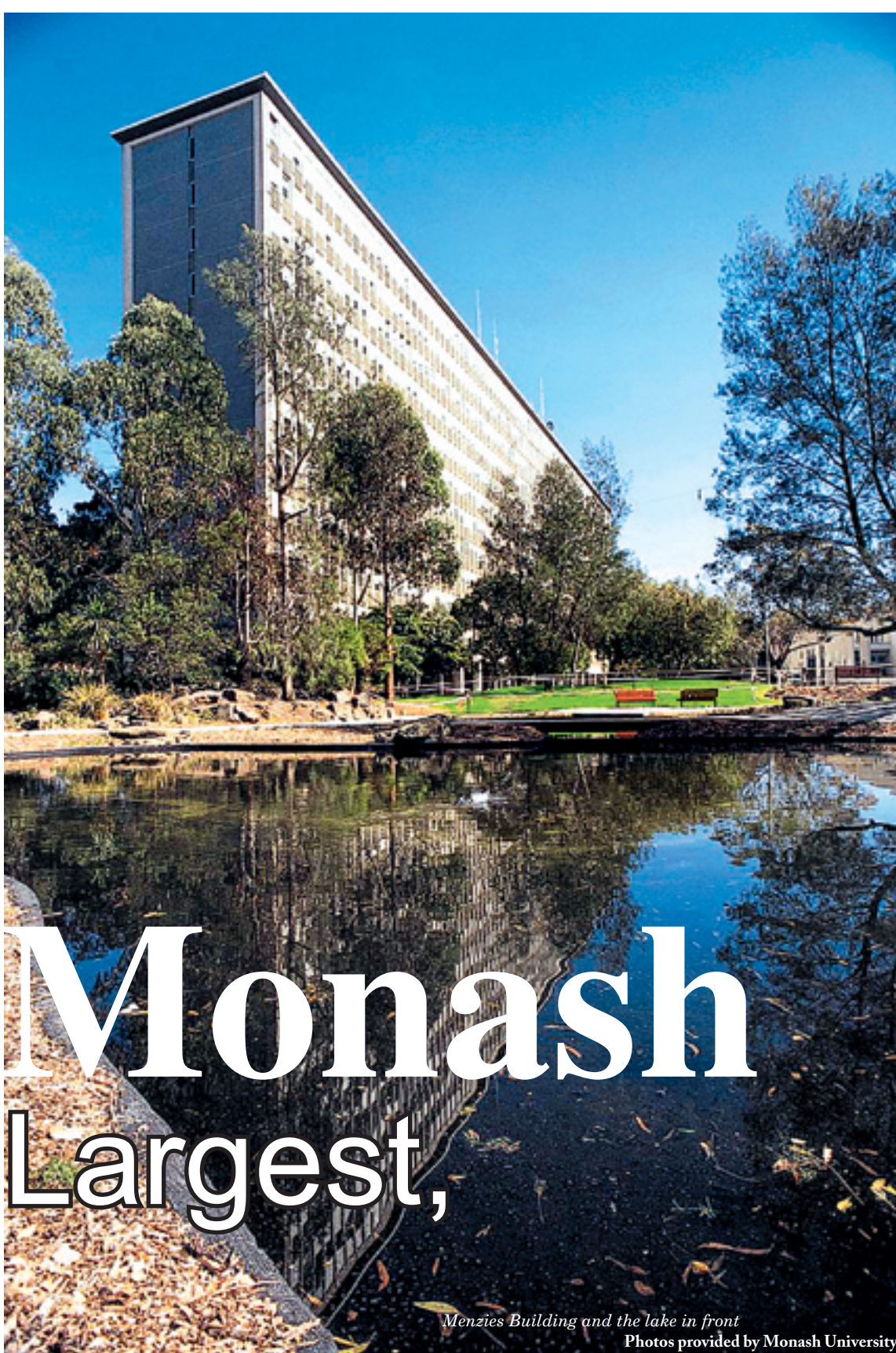
#### Student life and fees:

**What kind of activities are held during Orientation Week? Is there a kind of schedule that tells new students like us what to do?**

—fawn

Orientation (or 'O Week' as it is often referred to), is a fun time. Most students enjoy it immensely.

'O Week' is made up of a program of information sessions, tours and events designed to help you get to know Monash University and particularly your campus. The program introduces you to the services and facilities at Monash University, gives you important information about studying at Monash University and living in Australia to help with your transition, teaches you about local government services and the local community in general, gives you the opportunity to make friends with your fellow classmates and senior students just before starting your courses, and gives you the opportunity to meet



Menzie's Building and the lake in front

Photos provided by Monash University

staff of Monash International and Monash University.

The orientation program is not only an important introduction to Monash University and Melbourne, it also incorporates the registration and enrolment sessions, which are compulsory for all new students to attend.

For more information about orientation, and the specific dates at your campus, please download the Orientation Program Brochure: [www.monash.edu.au](http://www.monash.edu.au)

**I am a clerk working in a domestic enterprise in China. I intend to further my studies abroad and wonder whether my daughter can continue her primary school there?**

—curtain

You are welcome to bring your children with you to Australia, but you will be required to pay school fees for them if they attend an Australian school. However, if you receive an Australian Government Scholarship (IPRS or ADS) you may be eligible for an exemption from your children's school fees.

For full details, check with the nearest Australian Diplomatic Mission, or if in Victoria, with the Department of Educa-

tion and Training. The Web sites are: [www.dfat.gov.au/missions](http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions) and [www.deet.vic.gov.au/deet](http://www.deet.vic.gov.au/deet).

Also, if you need help with childcare placements, or counseling for parenting issues and family problems, our childcare and family support staff can assist.

**What are Monash's charges for tuition fees and other expenses?**

—rose007

Tuition fees are different for different courses. Tuition fees for 2005 are detailed at [www.monash.edu/international/fees](http://www.monash.edu/international/fees). Monash University undertakes that any adjustment factor will not exceed 10 percent per annum.

In addition to your annual tuition fees, you will be asked to pay a general service or amenities fee every semester. The general service fee contributes to the operation of student organizations, facilities and services.

**Can we do part-time jobs there? Does the university provide related services?**

—playgirl

Monash Careers and Employment can help you find part-time or casual work while you study, and a full-time job once you graduate. The online job sys-

tem can search for jobs in different countries and remains available after graduation.

Monash Careers and Employment has produced the on-line Job Seeker's Guide, available exclusively to Monash students. The guide is a new initiative to help students find valuable information when making job and career decisions.

**What kinds of entertainment activities can students take part in on campus?**

—black coffee

As a Monash University student, you will have access to the university's considerable sporting facilities, including swimming pools, tennis courts, gymnasiums, basketball courts, squash courts, martial arts venues, hockey fields, soccer, baseball and athletics fields, and a ski lodge at Mt. Buller.

You can also join a number of sporting and cultural clubs, including a range of martial arts, soccer and badminton clubs.

(Edited By Zhang Nan)

## Notice

*Beijing Today* will invite two guests from the University of Queensland and University of Adelaide to the Study Abroad Salon on Monday, January 31:

13:00: Ms. Monica Turvey, Director International, University of Queensland

14:00: Mr. John Taplin, Pro Vice Chancellor and Mr. Peter Ball, Director International of the University of Adelaide

You can log on to: <http://bjtoday.ynet.com>, or forward questions to the host Ayi at: [hostayi@ynet.com](mailto:hostayi@ynet.com).

### 通知

“今日北京”将在下周一(1月24日)邀请昆士兰大学和阿德莱德大学老师来“留学聊天室”与网友交流。具体安排是:

13:00: 昆士兰大学国际部主任 Ms. Monica Turvey

14:00: 阿德莱德大学副校长(国际) Mr. John Taplin 和国际部主任 Mr. Peter Ball

欢迎届时登陆:  
<http://bjtoday.ynet.com>,  
或发问题给主持人阿义:  
[hostayi@ynet.com](mailto:hostayi@ynet.com)

## Ask Ayi:

**Q: Can you give me advice on how to rent housing in Holland?**

— 7825

**A:** It is not easy to find housing in Holland, especially in big cities in the western part of the country, so it's good to consider the issue beforehand.

There are five main ways you can rent housing. First, some universities have good relationships with real estate agencies that can help their students find places to live. You can check with a university's registration department. But student flats are very popular and you may need to wait for one to become available. Another place to check is student notice boards on campus, where people may post ads or fliers. The popular *Via Via* newspaper provides all kinds of useful information and every week carries updated information on housing for rent. Plus, some Chinese people living in Holland have housing that they are willing to rent to Chinese students. As a last resort, you can simply check with a local rental agency.

**Q: I have heard about France's N+i plan, which seems intended to cultivate engineers. I am very interested in this - could you give me some more details?**

— flodao

**A:** N+i is a league founded by more than 50 engineering colleges. It provides high-quality engineering courses in 35 cities in France. It is aimed at students in engineering fields, companies that want to train engineers, universities and professional engineers.

**Q: Can you give me some information about scholarships at universities in Singapore?**

— kay

**A:** Many organizations, such as charities, religious institutions, big companies and government agencies, offer scholarships. All scholarships have conditions. Some are exclusive to a particular institution, while some are available only to students from certain countries or in particular subjects. Or they may just cover certain types of expenses, like travel or accommodation. Selection is usually based on academic excellence.

(Edited by Zhang Nan)

## US Invites Chinese to Further Studies

By Zhao Hongyi

Visa applications to the United States may have become more time-consuming and difficult since the 9-11 terrorist attacks in 2001, but the country is now working to welcome more students from China.

Donald Bishop, minister-counselor for press and cultural affairs at the US Embassy in Beijing extended an invitation to Chinese students at a press conference on Wednesday.

"The US has the largest, most advanced higher education system in the world," Bishop said.

He admitted that he is receiving heavy pressure from US universities and colleges urging him and Washington to issue more visas to qualified international students.

In 2002, 26,000 Chinese students received visas to study in the US. The number dropped to 18,000 in 2003 and rebounded to 22,000 in 2004, according to the US Embassy.

Bishop argued the strength of the US education system based, in part, on its size. The US has 2,300 four-year, degree-granting colleges and universities, vastly more than the 228 in the UK, 368 in Germany, 545 in France, 709 in Japan, 200 in South Korea, 42 in Australia and 31 in New Zealand.

Nearly 62,000 Chinese students are currently studying in the US, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE), an American education industry promoter. IIE set up an office in the US Embassy in Beijing earlier this month.



Main building on the Caulfield campus



# Prime Time Winter Produce

By Joel Kirkhart

A strange, but effective way to chart Beijing's incredible recent changes is to simply look at local vegetable markets. Only several years ago, little more than root vegetables and cabbage – lots of cabbage – were available during winter months. Nowadays, all kinds of fresh produce, whether asparagus grown in local greenhouses or strawberries shipped in from warm foreign climes, can be found throughout the frosty season.

Yet the oldies but goodies are most likely to truly satisfy when the mercury plunges. In Beijing, the arguable champions of the winter produce world are three easily overlooked treasures that are simple, cheap, easy to eat and sure to ward off the chills: persimmons, chestnuts and pickled cabbage, or *suancai*.

## Cold weather bright spots

Persimmons (*shizi*) are believed to have first come from China and remain as much a part of Beijing cuisine as candied crabapples and *zhajiangmian*. It's no wonder the city has a thing for persimmons – they may fall off the trees in autumn, but they hit peak ripeness in the depth of winter, just in time to counter the bleak cold with a badly needed splash of color and flavor.



Carefully diced persimmons make a delicious, sweet salsa when mixed with peppers, lime juice and a little salt.



China is believed to be the birthplace of pickled cabbage, whether its suancai or sauerkraut.

These smallish fruits are highly astringent and absolutely awful when eaten before they are ripe – which confusingly is when they look their worst. They are at their peak when their bright orange color has gone darker and they are so soft and goopy they could be taken for spoiled.

Don't buy more than you can eat in a short given period of time, because persimmons go off easily. Keep them refrigerated in a plastic bag, which can actually sweeten the fruit.

Eating a fine, ripe persimmon is simple. Cut off a circle of skin at the top, grab and spoon and dig in, as if the peel were holding a serving of pudding. The flesh will be jelly soft, with a deep orange brown hue and a sweet, slightly spiced flavor. For a little more sophistication, plunk a persimmon in the freezer and eat once solid for a smooth, sugary all-natural sorbet.

## Roasting on an open fire...

The people lining up at dried fruit and nut stands around town, despite the cold, are there for primarily one thing – fresh roasted chestnuts, just the thing to heat up cold bones.

Unlike most other nuts, chestnuts must be cooked before they're eaten. Boiled ones go into dishes like Shandong-style cabbage with chestnuts (*lizi baicai*) or into stews, while sweeter roasted ones are perfect for eating straight.

Roasting chestnuts can be done over a stove at home, but be ready for lots of smoke. Start with around one kilogram of nuts and score them by cutting through the shell on their bottoms twice to form an X shape. Toss the scored

nuts with about one teaspoon of vegetable oil and stir to coat. Heat a heavy, flat skillet over medium heat until hot, then throw in the nuts and roast, stirring every few minutes, for 15 minutes. Add around 1/4 cup of water and continue cooking, covered, stirring everyone once in a while until the water has boiled off and the chestnuts are tender, around five minutes more. Serve piping hot.

For something entirely different, try the following recipe for chestnut soup, a thick, creamy concoction that is like a space heater in a bowl on cold winter nights.

## Recipe: Cream of chestnut soup

3 tbsp unsalted butter  
1/2 cup each finely chopped celery, carrot, onion  
one small sprig fresh parsley  
2 whole cloves  
1 bay leaf  
6 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
3 cups cooked whole chestnuts, peeled (roasted, boiled or jarred)  
1/4 cup sherry  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
salt, black pepper to taste

Melt butter in heavy saucepan over low heat and stir in celery, carrot and onion. Cook over low heat until vegetables soften, 10 to 15 minutes. Add broth, parsley, cloves and bay leaf and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, 20 minutes. Add chestnuts and sherry and continue to simmer, covered, three minutes.

Puree soup in small batches using a blender or food processor (be very careful when pureeing hot liquids). Transfer pureed soup to a large saucepan, then stir in cream, pepper and salt to taste and reheat over moderate heat, stirring occasionally. Makes six large servings.

## Cabbage so bad, it's good

China's *suancai*, or pickled cabbage, is believed to be the origin of the German version, sauerkraut. That first pickle, made 2,000 years ago of cabbage fermented in wine, likely made its way to Europe via the plundering Mongolian hordes.

Eventually, both Germans and Chinese gave up the wine and started fermenting heads of cabbage simply by sprinkling them with salt, dousing them with boiling water and letting them literally fester in their own juices in jars or urns until pleasantly tart and



Cream of chestnut soup

crunchy.

In the West, sauerkraut is cooked with sausage, served as a side to meat dishes and stuffed into sandwiches like the Reuben, a deli standard. In China, it is a winter staple in the frigid northeast, where it goes into simple stir-fries, soups and even hotpot (just allow it took to cook through to keep some original flavor). Of course, it is also the key ingredient in the classic, satisfying, no-frills winter dish *suancai fensi*, or pickled cabbage with glass noodles.

It may not be hard to make suancai, but there is no need to go to the trouble with good products available at most grocery stores and open markets around town. Whether buying a whole head, a bag of sliced suancai or a can or jar of German sauerkraut, remember it pays to rinse pickled cabbage a bit before cooking to soften its salty, bitter edge.

Photos by Li Shuzhuan



Peter's is a haven of Americana stuck in an alley near the St. Regis. Here's hoping it can survive its hidden location.

# TASTES OF TEXAS



Mixed Fajitas, 79 yuan

By Sarah Bai

Ay carumba, how some people in this town, (reviewer included) long for real Mexican food, or at least something close. That long-yawning gap in the local market is now as close to filled as it ever has been since the opening of Peter's Tex-Mex Grill near the St. Regis hotel. For pure Mexican, it still strays from the mark, but not by too far and has plenty of Texas touches and other perks to make it worth hunting down.

Two pages of the lengthy menu are devoted to Mexican selections, though true to the restaurant's name, most items are from the Tex-Mex hybrid school of cooking. The satisfying nine layer dip had many of the ingredients that make Tex-Mex great, like sour cream, refried beans and guacamole, but the small portion struggled to live up to the 56 yuan price. Peter's chips scored for being fresh and crisp, but because they are made from flour, not corn, tortillas, there was something a little off. There was little room for complaint about the house salsa, which was very fresh, satisfyingly spicy and not at all sweet – the real deal.

Top spot among the main dishes goes to burritos boasted to be "so big they beep when they back up," so it was a little disappointing when they came out and were not so enormous. The filling was pure meat, in our case spiced shredded chicken, that was tasty and tender. Rice and beans were served on the side, and points go to Peter's for the topping dollop of sour cream, something other places

skimp on.

Burritos stuffed with sirloin were even better, the beef nicely cooked and well spiced. The chimichangas, basically burritos deep-fried until their tortilla casings are golden and crisp, were also very satisfying with a filling that included rice, beans and meat.

The rest of the menu is devoted to good ol' American fare: Cajun spicy fries, baked potatoes topped with sour cream and cheese, chili, burgers, sandwiches and plenty of pasta and pizza selections.

The solid breakfast section, available 24 hours a day, pits Peter's for direct competition with nearby Steak & Eggs. The new kid in town also offers steak and eggs for 49 yuan as well as other cholesterolific treats like breakfast burritos, superb, flaky biscuits with thick sausage gravy and crisp outside, fluffy inside pecan waffles. In the unlikely event you still have room, wash down a meal with a killer milkshake or a slice of the many delectable desserts.

Unassuming from the outside, Peter's has pleasant decor that mixes Mexican with Grandma's house. And the place is vast, foreseeably too big to survive in such a hidden location. If Peter's makes it, it'll be because of word of mouth – so anyone who's been waiting for Tex-Mex in the capital should get talking.

**Where:** 88A International Club, 21 Jianguomenwai Avenue, Chaoyang  
**Open:** 7 am - 11 pm  
**Tel:** 8532 2449  
**Average cost:** 75 yuan



Taco salad at Peter's Tex-Mex Café, 42 yuan

by Tom Spearman

The name says it all at Schindler's Tankstelle, which translates into Schindler's filling station. It's an unpretentious German eatery offering a warm and cozy atmosphere, excellent beer and simple, inexpensive food.

It's easy to associate Germany with top notch everything, including food, but those expecting fancy dishes may be disappointed. Atmosphere seems to be more the priority here, and the Tankstelle is ideal for those looking to hunker down with some fine German brews on a cold winter night.

The walls are lined with brickwork and the ceiling is low, like a bunker. And de-



# Fill up at the Station

spite January temperatures, the restaurant is usually packed, a highly cosmopolitan crowd turning up most nights and making it a wise idea to book ahead.

We had high hopes for the food, but these took a bit of a dive with the first course. Goulash soup seemed ideal for a freezing night, but while the ingredients were good, they'd oversalted it. And the salad consisted of bits of lettuce with some dressing that tasted like it was out of a can. The best part of the entrees was the spatze, which are dried Swabian noodles. They were lightly cooked and had a nice, subtle flavor.

For main courses, we dodged the hering and the black pudding and selected a nice length of rostbratwurst mit sauerkraut. The brat was excellent, tasty and not too fatty, with the sauerkraut providing the ideal foil. Schindler's is a sausage lovers' heaven with numerous sausage options on the menu.

The sirloin steak (75 yuan) was a fine cut and came perfectly cooked, although the sauteed onions alongside seemed a little too sweet and the chips weren't great. Overall, the food wasn't bad, but if you're looking for this kind of simple fare there are better choices in town.

When it comes to beer, however, Schindler's is going to take some beating. This is because as well as being fantastic, it isn't that expensive. Erdinger is a name known and craved by beer lovers and here it's available for a reasonable 25 yuan a bottle, for both the light and dark varieties. The draught beers are even better and cheaper. The Wernesgruner pils is light and refreshing, but the real star is the Einsiedler dark beer, probably the finest draught of anything this reviewer has ever tasted in Beijing. And for 20 yuan a glass? I'll have three!

**Where:** 15A Guanghua Lu, 200 meters east of Ritan Park south gate, Chaoyang  
**Open:** 11 am - midnight  
**Tel:** 8562 6439  
**Average cost:** 50-100 yuan per person



Movies



Himalaya Singh (Ximalaya Xing)

Directed by Wai Kah-Fai, starring Ronald Cheng, Francis Ng, Cecilia Cheung, Cherrie In, Chingwan Lau and Gauri S. Karnik. Yoga master Singh decides to participate in a competition hosted by the King of Yoga for the hand of his beautiful daughter. However, things doesn't quite go as planned when he stumbles into Tally, who falls for him and his yoga skills.

**Where:** UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Shuangyushu Kexueyuan, Haidian **When:** opens February 3 **Tel:** 8211 5566

Zhangs Diner

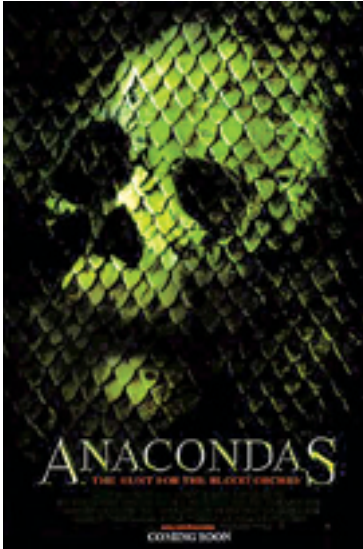
A documentary film about an impoverished Chinese couple that move to Beijing from their hometown in search of a better life. Director Mika Koshinen will appear at the screening to answer questions.

**Where:** Cherry Lanes Movies Theater, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** tonight and Saturday, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13501251303

Viol@

Directed by Donatella Maiorca, starring Stefania Rocca, Stefano Rota and Maddalena Crippa. Marta is an interviewer for a polling company – she listens to other people's dreams but she lives a cold and single life, after having left her boyfriend just before their marriage. One day she tries an online sex chat with the nickname of Viola, “meets” Wittler, and a burning fantasy sex relationship starts. As the days pass, Wittler gets more power over Marta until he manages to get her real name and address and the border between online life and real life vanishes. In Italian with English subtitles.

**Where:** Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'erjie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang **When:** February 3, 7:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187



Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid

The blood orchid – a rare flower that holds the secret of eternal life and a fortune to the pharmaceutical company that finds it. Led by a two-fisted soldier of fortune, a scientific expedition is sent deep into the jungles of Borneo to locate and bring back samples of the legendary plant. Battling their way upriver, the explorers brave poisonous insects, ferocious crocodiles and savage headhunters, unaware they're being stalked by an even greater danger: a nest of giant anacondas, voracious, 50-foot-long flesh-eaters who'll stop at nothing to protect their breeding ground, the blood orchid's home.

**Where:** UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Shuangyushu Kexueyuan, Haidian **When:** opens February 4 **Tel:** 8211 5566

Exhibitions



Art Prosperity

The unprecedented prosperity of China's art auction market is reviewed in an art exhibition meant to cater to common collectors. The Wan Fung gallery has gathered 18 promising young and middle-aged contemporary Chinese artists to show their latest ink and wash, oil painting, watercolor, print and lacquer works.

**Where:** Wan Fung Art Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** until February 7, daily 10 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320



Xie Daren Lacquer Paintings

Artist Xie Daren experiments with bringing ancient Chinese cultural art forms into modern times. He works with materials like acrylic, natural lacquer and gold foil.

**Where:** Fa Fa Gallery, 1 Xiangjianbei Lu, Jingshunlu, Chaoyang **When:** February 1-10, daily 10:30 am – 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8450 6888 ext. 310



Celebrate the Coming Year

This art exhibition, meant to celebrate the coming Lunar New Year and Year of the Rooster, features watercolors, oil paintings and prints by 11 promising and influential artists across China.

**Where:** Creation Art Gallery, north end of Ritan Lu, Chaoyang **When:** until February 8, daily 10 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570



Bold Creations

This four-man exhibition of artists Chen Wenbo, Liu Wei, Yang Yong and Zhu Jia features their latest bold creations.

**Where:** Courtyard Gallery, 95 Donghuamen Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** until March 9, daily 10 am – 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6526 8882



Performances

Song and Dance – As Shy As the Fire

As Shy As the Fire, the latest work of the Dongfang Singing and Dancing Troupe, is a splendid New Year feast of song and dance. Told through newly-designed Asian, African and Latin songs and dances, 12 love letters will guide you on a romantic trip around the world to feel the fiery passion of New Year's.

**Where:** Beijing Exhibition Theatre, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** January 29 – February 7, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120-1,000 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4455

2005 Spring Festival Concert

Senior folk singers from various ethnic groups of China will get together to perform clad in their traditional costumes. It promises to be a great way to ring in the Lunar New Year Chinese-style.

**Where:** Great Hall of the People **When:** January 31, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 280-1,280 yuan **Tel:** 6605 6847

Boss Jin's Last Night

In this musical and drama famed actress Liu Xiaoqing will reappear on stage in the leading role. Although already in her early 50s, Liu still seems young, playing the part of an actress and social-butterfly of the 1930s. The familiar lyrical and sentimental songs popular during the period will be performed in the show.

**Where:** Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimenwai Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** Saturday - February 2 **Admission:** 280-1,480 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext. 5216



Jams

Cock Countdown at Yan

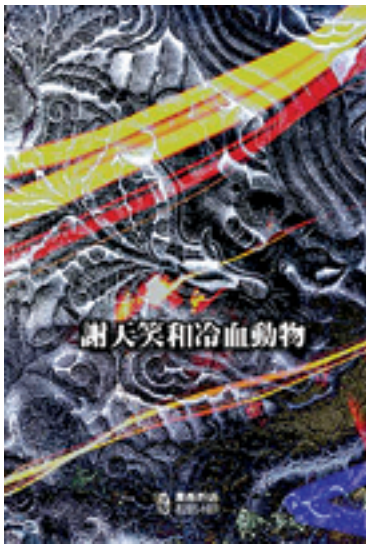
From the people that brought you the Fetish Ball comes the countdown to the Year of the Rooster. Spend your last few moments of the Year of the Monkey banging to the beats, keeping it live, in the cozy comfort of Yan Club Arts Center.

**Where:** Yan Club, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi Art District, Chaoyang **When:** Sunday, 9 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 13521997261

Xie Tianxiao and Cold Blooded Animal

Part of the live Movement Music Festival, Chinese rockers Xie Tianxiao and Cold Blooded Animal will leave you begging for mercy.

**Where:** Yugong Yishan Club, 1 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** tonight, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (20 yuan for students) **Tel:** 6415 0687



Activities

Egyptian and Arabian Belly Dance Workshop

The teacher of this special dance workshop is Natalia Gaidoukova of Russia, a certified oriental dance choreographer with more than three years' international experience and the winner of the 2004 World Belly Dance Competition.

**Where:** Move! Dance Center, Maizidian Zhengjie, in the back of CM Center, Chaoyang **When:** from January 29 **Cost:** 300 yuan per class (200 yuan for students) **Tel:** 6508 3314



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31 Monday	
Multiplicity	9 pm
1 Tuesday	
Catch Me if You Can	10:50 pm
2 Wednesday	
The Frighteners	9 pm
3 Thursday	
Hulk	9 pm
CCTV-9	
Monday – Friday	
Around China	6:30 am
Culture Express	8:30 am
Nature and Science /	
Chinese Civilization	11:30 am
Culture Express	2:30 pm
Nature and Science /	
Chinese Civilization	5:30 pm
Dialogue	7:30 pm
News Updates /	
Asia Today	8 pm
Sports Scene	11:15 pm
Saturday	
Travelogue	9:30 am
Center Stage	11:30 am
Sunday	
Sports Weekend	10 am
Documentary	10:30 am
This Week	12:30 am
China Radio International 91.5 FM	
Monday – Friday	
Easy FM Afternoon	2-7 pm
Fun in Beijing	5-5:30 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Saturday	
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Euro Hit 40	12:05-1 pm
Musique Sans Frontières	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Sunday	
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Jazz Beat	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm

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By Zhang Jianzhong



# Home Fit for a Prince



Residence of Prince Gong  
Photos by Tian Xiaotong

By Hester Xu and Yan Zhang

Beijing has an extraordinary number of former residences of princes, some open to the public, some hidden away, some forgotten. A tour of these gives a fascinating glimpse of this distinctive culture of royalty in the Qing dynasty.

## Gongwang's residence

For most people living in Beijing, the first place that comes to mind when "prince's residence" is mentioned is Gongwangfu, or Prince Gong's residence. Prince Gong was the title of Yixin, younger brother of Emperor Xianfeng (1851-61), but the mansion is better known for its architect and original resident, the infamous He Shen, a minister under Emperor Qianlong whose name is synonymous with the corruption and decline of the Qing Dynasty.

After Qianlong's death in 1799, Emperor Jiaqing charged He Shen with 20 crimes, one of which was that the mansion he had built at Houhai was too elaborate and bore too close a resemblance to parts of the royal palace. Once one of the most feared men in China, the former minister was told by the emperor to commit suicide, an order he had no choice but to comply with.

On entering the main gate, visitors first encounter Cangbaolou (mansion of hidden treasure). The mansion has 99 and a half rooms, following the example of the Forbidden City which has 9,999 and a half. The windows of each room have a different design, a feature He Shen reputedly used to tell which treasure was kept where. Facing the Xiyang (Occidental) Gate is a huge stone from Lake Taihu, said to resemble Guanyin (the goddess of mercy) holding a child. He Shen had only one son, and put the stone there as an expression of his desire to have more children.

Next to the stone is Fuchi, a pool designed in the shape of a flying bat. The Manchurian people believed that bats brought good fortune and happiness. Elms line

both sides of the pool, and their fallen leaves shine like copper coins in the water, symbolic of bringing wealth.

A stone tablet inscribed with the character *fu* (good fortune) in the handwriting of Emperor Kangxi is a rare example of the emperor's script, and is known as the "number one 'fu' in China."

Watching a performance of Peking opera in the ancient theater is another highlight of a visit to Gongwangfu.

Although sections remain open to the public, Prince Gong's residence is currently undergoing a major renovation, which is due to be completed by 2008.

**Where:** 17 Qianhai Xijie, Xicheng District

## Chunqinwang's residence

Another prince's residence near Houhai, Chunqinwang's residence was originally built for Mingzhu, a famous intellectual in the early Qing dynasty. It became the home of Chunxinwang and regent Zhaifeng during the late Qing dynasty, the last emperor, Puyi, was also born here.

After 1949, the garden became the formal residence of Song Qingling, the widow of Doctor Sun Yat-sun and honorary chairman of the People's Republic of China.

A pavilion in the garden surrounded by water on two sides bears the name Enboting, which means "the emperor's kindness is great." The emperor gave permission to draw water from Yuquan Mountain to the garden, the only such garden granted this privilege, so a pavilion was built to thank the emperor for his kindness.

The water in the garden is connected to Beihai, Houhai and the Forbidden City, sometimes you can even see ducks coming from Houhai in the garden.

**Where:** North bank of Houhai, Xicheng District

## Taobeile's residence

Taobeile's residence is another prince's residence by Houhai, less than a hundred meters from Gongwangfu. It was once the home of Yuwang, the 15th son of Emperor Kangxi. In 1902, Zaitao, the seventh son of Prince Chunxian, was adopted by Prince Zhongjun and granted the title Taobeile.



Taobeile's residence, now part of No. 13 Middle School

During the days of the Republic of China, the residence became part of the campus of Furen University. Today it is split into two sections, one belonging to the Continuing Education School of Beijing Normal University, the other to Beijing No. 13 Middle School.

Only a small section of the residence remains intact. But in the back garden of the Continuing Education School, fairy stones, towering trees, ancient pavilions and buildings still stand.

In the No. 13 Middle School, only a few buildings in the garden near the main gate remain intact. Walking a few steps inside, you will see that most of the old buildings have been replaced by classrooms. The middle school is not open to visitors.

**Where:** 27 Liuyin Jie, Xicheng District

## Qingqinwang's residence

Qingqinwang's residence is just 10 minutes' walk from the Beijing Normal University section of Taobeile's residence. Of the original three sections, only one rear chamber is left of the main chambers in the middle section, the east section has been renovated entirely and the west section, once the main living quarters, was taken over by the command center of the Beijing and Tianjin Garrison in 1949.

As a military zone,

the residence is closed to the public. Although the total area of the zone is quite large, it is likely that most of the ancient buildings have already been leveled to make way for office buildings. Just a few meters away is the home of Qingqinwang's officer in charge of the stable, which later became the home of Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang, who lived there for 10 years.

**Where:** 3 Dingbu Jie, Xicheng District

## Fujunwang's residence

After Yunxiang, the 13th son of Emperor Kangxi died, his old residence was converted into a temple. The emperor granted new land to the second-generation prince Yinqin to build a home, which is today known as Fujunwang's residence.

Soon after Zaiheng took over the residence as the sixth generation prince, he was deprived of his title and ordered to commit suicide by empress dowager Cixi. In 1850, the youngest son of emperor Daoguang was granted the title Fujunwang and in 1864, he moved into the residence.

Except for a wooden plaque half covered by the thick branches of a tree, which identifies it as Fujunwang's residence, hardly any trace of the old prince's residence can be found from the main entrance. Inside, there is a large garden, but it is noisy and mostly used as living area by local residents. The sense of grandeur associated with a prince's residence manifests itself only after one enters the middle garden. The old buildings in the garden are occupied by eight different companies, and a sign warning "no visitors allowed" is immediately visible outside their doors. The most prominent building is the Yin'an Chamber and a pair of stone lions outside the gate.

**Where:** 137 Chaoyangmennei Dajie, Dongcheng District

## Xunjunwang's residence

Xunjunwang, whose real name was Yongzhang, was the third son of Emperor Qianlong. He was granted the title Xunjunwang posthumously. The residence was actually built for Jinyi, the foster son of Xunjunwang, in keeping with the strict rules governing the ownership of such residences.

The main courtyard in the west section is a rare example of these rules, but all the old buildings inside the courtyard have been demolished. The rear courtyard features a set of main chambers and attached chambers, the east courtyard has a garden and a living area. The east section is a whole set of courtyard buildings, including the main courtyard, the middle courtyard and the rear courtyard with similar layout. All are characterized by north chambers and attached chambers in the east and west.

The residence has become an old people's community center and does not allow visitors. Most of the remaining buildings are in good condition, but a good part of it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.

**Where:** 13, 15 Fangjia Hutong, Andingmennei Dajie, Dongcheng.

## Beijing's Princely Residences

After conquering the vast area of central China and moving his capital to Beijing (then known as Dadu) in 1215, Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan ignored the Tang and Song dynasty practice of granting titles to royal family members, sending them instead to guard provinces of his far-flung empire. No prince's residences were allowed in the capital.

In 1369, the first Emperor of the Ming Dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang reverted to the old system by granting noble titles in eight ranks. A year later, Zhu Li, the fourth son of the emperor was granted the title of Yanwang (Lord of Yan) and the inner chamber of the Yuan Dynasty imperial court was renovated and renamed Yanshan Fu, which is the earliest prince's residence in Beijing.

In 1402, Zhu Li usurped the throne in a military coup d'etat and began to relocate the princes guarding frontier fortresses to the interior of China. Ten residences were built in 1417 south of what is now Wangfujing to receive the princes coming to the capital to meet the emperor.

The idea of granting titles to the princes without giving them real power was copied in the Qing Dynasty, which began in 1644 with the Qing army crossing the Great Wall. It was considered a fool-proof method of ensuring a long and peaceful rule for the emperor. All princes were given the right to build their residence within the inner city of Beijing.

Although special rules were set between 1636 and 1652 governing the standard and scale of prince's residences, to distinguish different rank of the princes, they were not always strictly observed.

To commend their efforts in bringing the Qing army into China, emperor Qianlong granted hereditary title to eight princes in 1788, commonly known as the "eight iron-hat princes." Later on, another four royal families were added to their ranks, thus becoming known as the "twelve iron-hat princes."

Stone lion at Chunqinwang's residence

